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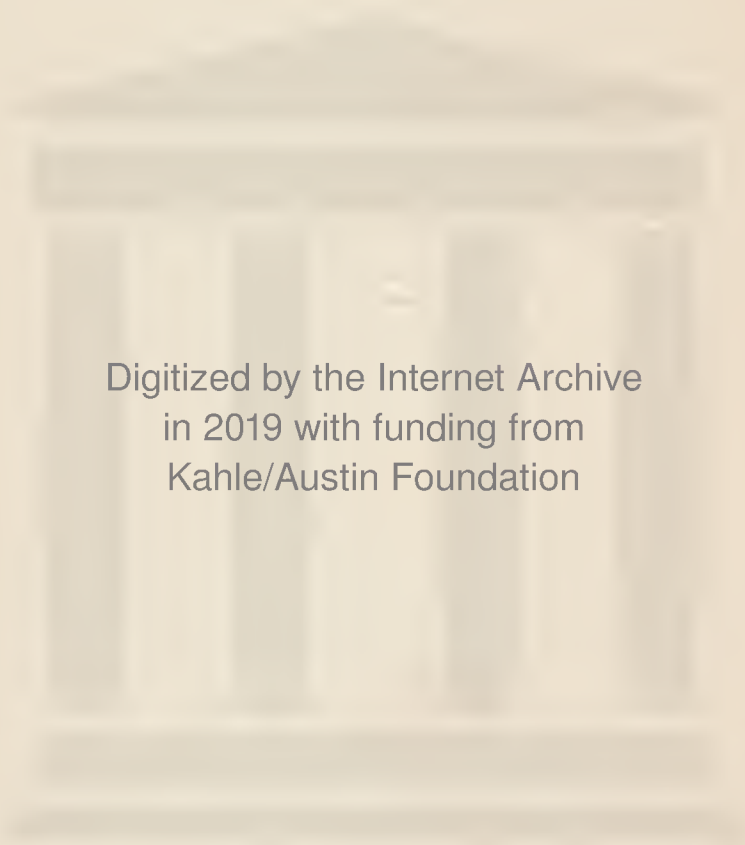
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THE FISHER MAIDEN



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WORKS OF
BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSSON

PATRIOTS EDITION

THE FISHER MAIDEN

Translated from the Norse

By

RASMUS B. ANDERSON



NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY

PT 8807 1882 [v. 3]

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PREFACE.

THE Fisher Maiden was written in 1867 and 1868, and was published simultaneously in Norway and Germany. The popularity of the story is sufficiently demonstrated by the fact that it has appeared in four German and in two English translations, the present being the third.

The characters are, perhaps, less ideal than those of his peasant stories, and the style throughout indicates that the author has entered upon a new era in his literary development. His aim here is to show how irresistible is the power of innate vocation and natural talent, and to vindicate the theatre as a place not only of amusement, but also of instruction, against the unjust criticisms of the clergy.

In the weird poem, in the eleventh chapter, on the young viking, Mr. Björnson depicts, in strangely profound sentences, his own career, his early struggles, and the victory he so quickly gained. Indeed, as Björnson said to me in 1872, the Fisher Maiden is Björnson himself, and in the young viking he

has given, in a few enigmatic strokes, a picture of both the heroine and the author. Nowhere does Mr. Björnson's patriotism burst forth in purer and nobler strains than in the short poem that follows soon after that on the young viking. It is all aglow with love and pride and confidence and hope, and is a perfect mirror of the poet's feelings and aspirations in the midst of his great success.

The poems in this volume are translated by Augusta Plesner and Frederika Richardson, with the exception of the one at the end of chapter iv., beginning, "Ah, sweet is Love's first meeting!" and the one in chapter ix., beginning "Joy now is kindled," both of which are by Auber Forestier. Music has been written for "Ah, sweet is Love's first meeting," by Halfdan Kjerulf, and for "Joy now is kindled," by Edward Grieg. The latter may be found in the "Norway Music Album."

RASMUS B. ANDERSON.

ASGARD, MADISON, WISCONSIN.

March, 1882.

THE FISHER MAIDEN.

CHAPTER I.

WHERE herring have for a long time been caught in abundance, there gradually grows up a town, provided that other circumstances are favorable. Not only may it be said of such towns that they are cast up out of the sea, but at a great distance they actually resemble washed-up timber and fragments of wreck, or a mass of keeled boats, overturned by the fishermen for shelter some stormy night. A nearer view shows how entirely by chance the whole has been built, for here a rock lies in the midst of a thoroughfare, there water divides the borough into three or four parts, while the streets wind and curve in every direction. But there is one quality common to them all: there is refuge in the harbor for the largest ships; it is as snug in there as in a box; and therefore these havens are very grateful to vessels that with tattered sails and battered

bulwarks are driven in from the open sea in search of a breathing-place.

In a small town of this kind all is still; everything noisy is banished to the wharves, where are moored the peasants' boats, and where ships load and unload. Along the wharves runs the one street of our little town; the white and red one and two-story houses are on the opposite side; but they are not built wall to wall, they have neat gardens around them; and so there is a long, broad street which, when the wind blows landward, is filled with the odor of whatever may be on the wharves. It is quiet here — not from fear of the police, for as a rule there is none, — but from dread of gossip, since all the inhabitants know one another. When you walk down the street you must bow at each window, where usually sits an old lady who is ready to return your greeting. Moreover, you must salute every one you meet; for all these people, as they move so noiselessly about, are continually reflecting on what is proper in general and for themselves in particular. He who oversteps the standard prescribed for his rank or social position, forfeits his good name, for not only is *he* known to his neighbors, but so are his father and his grandfather, and inquiries are

at once made as to whether there has ever before been seen a tendency in the family to unseemly behavior.

To this peaceful town fared, many years ago, that worthy man, Per Olsen. He came from the country, where he had earned a livelihood by peddling and fiddling. He opened a shop in the town for his old customers, where, in addition to his other wares, he sold brandy and bread; and he might often be heard pacing up and down in the chamber behind the shop, playing spring-dances and wedding-marches. Each time he passed the glass loop-hole in the door, he would peep through, and if a customer was entering the shop he would wind up his playing with a trill and go in. Business flourished; he married and had a son whom he named after himself, calling him not Per, though, but Peter.

Little Peter was to become what Per knew *he* was not — an educated man; and so the boy was entered at the Latin school. When those who should have been his comrades thrashed him home from their games because he was a son of Per Olsen, his father thrashed him back again, — there was no other way of educating the boy. Consequently little Peter felt forsaken at school, grew indolent, and gradually

became so totally indifferent to everything that his father could neither beat a smile nor a tear out of him. Then Per did away with the floggings and placed the boy in the shop. Greatly was he astonished when he saw his son dealing out to each customer exactly what was asked for, neither giving a grain too much, nor eating a prune himself, but weighing, reckoning, and entering the sales, with unmoved countenance, usually without speaking, and though slowly yet with scrupulous accuracy.

Again the father became hopeful, and sent his son by a herring boat to Hamburg, in order to place him at a commercial college, and give him an opportunity to acquire polished manners. Peter was absent eight months ; that was long enough, no doubt. Before starting for home he had provided himself with six new suits of clothes, and when he landed he wore them all, one over the other, "for all articles in actual wear are exempt from duty." He made precisely the same appearance in the street the next day as when he came ashore, minus his circumference. He walked stiff and straight, without a curve in his arms or hands ; he bowed with a sudden jerk, bending as if he had no joints, only to grow the next moment as rigid as ever ; he had become the embodi-

ment of politeness, but not a word did he have to say for himself; his manners were abrupt and tinged with a certain shyness. He no longer wrote his name Olsen, but Ohlsen, which gave the wags of the town opportunity for the following conundrum:—

“How far did Peter Olsen get in Hamburg?”

Answer: “To the first letter.”

He had furthermore meditated calling himself “Pedro;” but having had so much annoyance to endure for the sake of the *h*, he gave up this idea and subscribed himself P. Ohlsen. He enlarged his father’s business, and at the age of twenty-two married a shop-girl with red hands in order to have some one to keep house; for his father had just become a widower and Peter thought it was safer to take a wife than a housekeeper. On the anniversary of their wedding-day, she presented him with a son, who a week later was christened Pedro.

Now that worthy Per Olsen had become a grandfather, he felt, as it were, an inner call to grow old, so he gave up his business to his son, took a seat on a bench outside the door and smoked plug tobacco in a short pipe. Discovering one day that life was growing tedious out there he began to wish for a speedy death, and as all his wishes had been quietly fulfilled, so it was with this one.

While Peter, the son, had inherited exclusively one side of his father's talents — business shrewdness, — Pedro, the grandson, seemed to have exclusively inherited the other — taste and ear for music. He was very slow in learning to read, but could sing quite early; he played the flute so well that he attracted much attention; he had a refined look and a tender heart. This, however, was only a source of annoyance to his father, who wanted to bring the boy up to his own business-like activity. When Pedro was forgetful about anything, he was neither scolded nor flogged as his father had been; he was pinched. This was done very quietly, with a kindliness of manner that might almost be termed politeness. Each evening when his mother undressed him she counted the black and blue spots on his body and covered them with kisses; but she offered no resistance, for she herself got pinched. For every rent in the boy's clothes, — which were his father's Hamburg suits made over, — for every stain on his school-books, she was blamed. Consequently, the continual cry was: "Do not do that, Pedro! Take care, Pedro! Remember, Pedro!" — and the boy was afraid of his father and tired of his mother. At the hands of his comrades he suffered no harm, as he always began to cry at the

least provocation and beg them to spare his clothes ; but he was nicknamed “withered-branch,” and not deemed worthy of much notice. He was like a sickly, featherless duckling, always waddling about after the flock and running far away by itself to eat the scanty morsel it had succeeded in snatching from the others. No one shared with him, neither did he, therefore, share with any one.

Soon, however, he discovered that his lot would be different among the humbler children of the town ; they had more patience with him because he was more genteel than they. A tall, sturdy girl, who held undisputed sway over a whole troop of boys, took a fancy to him. He never grew weary of looking at her. She had raven-black hair which formed one mass of curls about her head, and was never combed save with the fingers ; she had vigorous blue eyes, a narrow brow, and all her features blended into but one expression. She was always in a whirl of excitement or at work, went barefoot, bare-armed, and sunburned in the summer, and in the winter was clad as lightly as other children are in the summer. Her father was a pilot and fisherman ; she ran from house to house selling his fish, she sat at the oars keeping the boat still against wind and tide, and when he was

out piloting, she carried on the fishing alone. No one could pass her without turning to take a second look, so self-reliant was she. Her name was Gunlaug, but she was called the fisher maiden, a title she accepted as her rank. In the childish games she always sided with the weak ; she had an impulse to defend others, and she now became the protector of this refined, delicate boy.

In her boat he could play his flute, which had been solemnly forbidden at home, as it was thought it would take his mind from his studies. She rowed him out on the fjord, she took him with her on her long fishing expeditions, soon he even made night excursions with her. They used to row out toward the setting sun in the clear, calm summer evenings, he playing his flute, or listening to her while she told him all she knew about mermen, spectres, shipwrecks, foreign lands, and black people, just as she had heard it from the sailors. She shared her food with him as she did her knowledge, and he accepted all, giving nothing in return ; for he neither brought food from home nor imagination from school. They would row about until the sun went down behind the snow-clad mountains and then, landing on some rocky island, kindle a fire, that is, she would gather together

twigs and brushwood, while he sat and looked on. She always carried along with her one of her father's sea-jackets and a bed-spread for him ; in these she would wrap him. She tended the fire and he went to sleep ; she kept herself awake with snatches of songs and hymns, singing in a loud clear voice until he was asleep, then in a softer tone. When the sun once more rose in the opposite horizon, and cast over the mountains a pale yellow light as a harbinger of its approach, she would awaken him. The forest was still dark, the meadow gloomy, but both gradually became suffused with a gleaming, roseate light until the mountain crest glowed and all the colors of the rainbow came pouring over the scene. Then they would push the boat back into the water, plow the waves in the dark morning breeze, and soon near the shore where the other fishermen were anchored.

When winter set in and the trips ceased, he sought her in her home ; he came frequently and watched her while she worked ; but neither he nor she spoke much ; it seemed as if they were merely waiting together for the summer. When it came it robbed him, alas, of the new prospects life was unfolding to him. Gunlaug's father died, and she left the town, while Pedro, by the advice of his teachers, was put into the

shop There he served behind the counter with his mother; for his father, who had gradually become the color of the groats he had so long been weighing, was forced to take to his bed in the back chamber. Even from there he wanted to have part in everything going on; must know what each one had sold, but would pretend not to hear until he got his wife or son near enough to pinch them. And when the wick had become quite dry in this small lamp, one night it went out. The wife wept, she knew not precisely why; but the son could not press out a tear. As they had money enough to live on, they wound up the business, removed every trace of it, and turned the shop into a sitting-room. There the mother sat by the window knitting stockings; Pedro established himself in the room on the other side of the passage, and devoted his time to flute-playing. No sooner had summer come, however, than he bought a little light sailing-boat, crossed over to the rocky island, and stopped where Gunlaug was wont to anchor.

And one day, as he lay reposing in the heather, he saw a boat steering straight toward him; it came alongside his own, and Gunlaug stepped out. She was wholly unchanged, although she was now fully grown and taller

than other women. But the moment she laid eyes on him she slowly drew back ; it had not occurred to her that he too had grown up.

She did not know this pale, thin face ; it was no longer sickly and refined, it was dull and heavy. But as he gazed at her his eyes became filled with the calm light of bygone dreams ; she came forward again, and each step nearer seemed to take a year from him ; when she stood beside him, where he had jumped up, he laughed like a child, talked like a child ; that old face was like a mask concealing a hidden child : he had become older, it was true, but he had not grown.

Still, it was just this child she was seeking, and now that she had found him again she knew not what next she should do ; she laughed and blushed. Involuntarily he felt something like power rising within him ; it was for the first time in his life. At the same moment he grew handsome — it was, perhaps, but for an instant, but in that instant she was won.

Hers was one of those natures that can only love the weak on whom tenderness has been lavished by them. She had meant to pass two days in town ; she remained two months. During these two months Pedro grew more than during all the rest of his youth ; he was so far

uplifted beyond his dream-life and lethargy that he made plans — he resolved to go abroad and study music. One day when he was speaking of this, she grew pale and said: “Yes — but then we must get married first.” He looked at her; she fixed her eyes firmly on him in return; then they both flushed crimson, and he said, “What would people say to that?”

Gunlaug had never imagined that he could have a will opposed to her own, because she had never cherished a wish that was not his. But now she read in the depths of his soul that *he* had never for a moment thought of sharing with her anything but what she herself had given. In one minute she discovered that it had been thus all their lives. She had begun with compassion and ended with love for the object of her own kindness. Well for her could she but have retained her self-control a little while longer. He saw her rising anger, and in terror cried: “I will.” She heard it; but indignation at her own stupidity and his wretched weakness, at her own shame and his cowardice, seethed up with such fiery speed to the point of explosion, that never did love kindled in childhood and radiant sunset, cradled by the waves and moonbeams, with the tones of a flute and low singing for an accompaniment, have a more

sorrowful end. She seized him with both hands, lifted him from the ground and thrashed him to her heart's content; then she rowed back to town and forthwith started on foot across the mountains.

Pedro had sailed out that morning a lovesick youth, on his way to conquer manhood; he rowed home again an aged person who had never known manhood. His life owned but one remembrance, and that his own folly had lost; he had but one place of resort in the world, and thither he no longer dared go. While brooding over his own wretchedness and how all this had come to pass, his enterprising mood sank, as it were, into a slough, never more to rise. The small boys of the town, remarking his strange ways, soon began tormenting him, and as he had always been a mysterious character to the townsfolk, no one knowing anything about his ways or means, it did not occur to any one to interfere in his behalf. Soon he scarcely dared stir out of his house, at all events, not in the streets. His whole existence became one struggle with the boys, who doubtless did him the same service as gnats of a hot summer day: without them he would have sunk into an unbroken stupor.

Nine years later Gunlaug returned to the

town quite as unexpectedly as she had left it. She brought with her a little girl about eight years old, the image of her former self, only that everything about the child was more refined and seemed, so to speak, as if wrapt in a dream. Gunlaug had been married, it was said, money had been left her, and now she had come back to open a sailor's inn.

This she managed so well that merchants and skippers got into the habit of coming to her to hire hands, sailors to seek employment. She never charged a penny commission, but despotically wielded the power this agency gave her. Although she was but a woman, and never left her house, she was most emphatically, "the influential man" of the town. She was called "fisher Gunlaug," or "Gunlaug on the hill-side;" her title of "fisher maiden" was transferred to her daughter, who went ranging about the town at the head of an army of small boys.

It is the daughter's story which is here to be told. *She* had something of her mother's strength of character, and she found opportunity to use it.

CHAPTER II.

THE many lovely gardens of the town, now in their second and third bloom, were fragrant after rain. The sun was setting behind the mountains of eternal snow ; the whole sky above them was in a blaze of glory, and the snow peaks gave back a subdued reflection. The nearer mountains lay wrapped in shadows, but they were nevertheless radiant with their many-hued autumnal forests. The rocky islands which formed a long line in the midst of the fjord, as if they came rowing into the harbor, revealed still more gorgeous coloring in their dense woods than did the mountains, because they could more distinctly be seen. The sea was calm ; a large ship was just being towed in. The inhabitants of the town sat out on the steps of their porches, that were well sheltered by the rose-bushes on either side ; they were talking across from porch to porch, running over to visit one another, or exchanging greetings with the passers-by, who were on their way to the long avenues outside the town

Save the occasional tones of a piano, floating through some open window, scarcely a sound broke in upon the conversation ; the last rays of the setting sun, as they lingered on the sea, increased the sense of perfect peace.

Then suddenly there arose as great a tumult in the heart of the town, as if a battery had been opened there. Boys shouted, girls screamed, other boys hurrahed, old women scolded and commanded, the policeman's big dog barked, and every cur in town bayed in return. People inside were forced to come pouring out in the street. So tremendous became the noise that even the amtmand¹ had to turn on his porch and drop the words, "Something must be the matter."

"What is it?" was asked in excited tones of those on the steps by people rushing in from the avenues. "Ay, what is it?" replied those on the steps. "Dear me! what can be the matter?" all now inquired when any one appeared from the centre of the town. But as this town lies like a half-moon about a gently winding bay, it was quite a long time before the reply could reach both ends of the street. "It is only the fisher maiden."

This adventurous spirit, screened by a for

¹ The magistrate.

midable mother, and sure of the protection of every seaman (for an extra dram was to be had gratis of the mother for such service), at the head of her small army had made an assault on a large apple-tree in Pedro Ohlsen's orchard. The plan of attack was as follows: some of the small boys were to attract Pedro to the front of his house by slapping the rose-bushes against the window-panes; meanwhile, one was to shake the tree, which stood in the centre of the garden, and the rest were to fling apples in all directions over the fence — not to steal them, far from it! merely to have some fun.

This ingenious plan had been hatched that same evening in the rear of Pedro's garden; but, as luck would have it, Pedro was seated just inside the fence, and heard every word. Somewhat before the appointed time he managed to get the intoxicated policeman of the town and his large dog into his back room, where they were both treated. When the fisher maiden's curly pate was seen above the paling, and at the same time a multitude of little eager faces were peeping through on every side, Pedro suffered the small rogues to shake the rose-bushes in the front of the house with all their might — he calmly waited in the back room. And when the whole troop had noise-

lessly gathered about the tree in the garden, just as the fisher maiden, barefoot and tattered, had climbed up to give it a shaking, the back door burst open, and Pedro and the policeman rushed out, armed with clubs, and with the great dog at their heels. A shriek of dismay arose among the boys; a troop of little girls, who in all innocence were playing "tag" outside the fence, supposing some one was being murdered in the garden, fell to screaming most lustily. The boys who had escaped, hurrahed; those who had been caught in the fence howled under the strokes of the clubs, and in order that the whole might be complete, a number of old women, who always spring up where the shrieks of boys are heard, blended their shrill voices with the rest. Even Pedro and the policeman were alarmed, and began to make terms with the old women; but, meanwhile, the boys ran away. The dog, who had been the greatest terror of all to the boys, clearing the fence, set out in pursuit of them, — for this was sport for him. On they sped through the town like wild ducks: boys, girls, the dog, and screams.

All the while the fisher maiden sat quietly up the tree, thinking that nobody had noticed her. Cowering in the topmost branch, she

followed, through the foliage, the progress of the contest. But when the policeman, in a fit of fury, had made a sally on the old crones outside, Pedro Ohlsen, left alone in the garden, walked straight under the tree, looked up, and called out: —

“Come down this moment, you wretch!”

There was heard not the slightest sound from the tree.

“Will you come down, I say? I know you are up there!”

The most profound silence!

“I will go into the house for my gun and shoot up at you; yes, I will!”

He made a movement to go.

“Booh-hooh-hooh!” came from the tree.

“Oh, you may bawl as much as you please, for I am going to put a whole charge of shot into you up there; I can tell you!”

“Oh, booh-hooh-hooh-hooh!” came in owl-like tones. “I am so frightened.”

“Oh, the deuce you are! You are the worst mischief-maker of the whole lot; but I have you now!”

“Oh, you dear, good, kind man, you! I will never do so any more.”

And with this she aimed a rotten apple right at his nose, and a ringing peal of laughter fol-

lowed it. The apple was mashed over his whole face ; and while he was wiping it away, she sprang down and was scaling the fence before he could reach her. She would have cleared it had she not been so terrified lest he was at her heels, that she let go instead of calmly working her way over. When he caught hold of her she set up a scream ; it rang out with such a shrill, wailing, piercing sound that he grew alarmed, and loosed his grasp. At her signal of terror, the people outside the paling uplifted their voices, too ; and hearing this she at once gathered courage.

“ Let me go, or I will tell my mother ! ” she threatened, and was now all flash and fire.

Then he recognized her face, and shrieked, “ Your mother ? *Who* is your mother ? ”

“ Gunlaug on the hill-side, fisher Gunlaug,” the girl repeated, triumphantly, for she saw his dismay.

Near-sighted as he was, he had never noticed her before now ; he was the only one in town who did not know who she was ; he did not so much as know that Gunlaug was in the place. Like one possessed he cried out : —

“ What is your name ? ”

“ Petra ! ” the girl shouted, still louder than before.

“Petra!” shrieked Pedro, and turning, fled into the house as if he had encountered the Evil One himself.

But as the pallor of terror and that of the direst wrath bear a close resemblance to each other, Petra supposed he had rushed in after his gun. Fear overpowered her, she already felt the shot in her back, and as the garden gate was just then broken open from the outside, she bolted through, her dark hair flowing behind her like a stream of terror, her eyes flaming; the dog, whom she met in her flight, turned and pursued her, barking, and then she bolted into the house, stumbling against her mother who was just coming in from the kitchen with a dish of soup in her hand. The girl fell on the dish, the soup streamed over the floor, and a “the deuce take it!” from the mother, accompanied the fall. But as Petra lay sprawling there in the soup, she bawled:—

“He is going to shoot me, mother, to shoot me.”

“Who is going to shoot you, you troll?”

“He — Pedro Ohlsen! We were taking his apples!” — she never dared speak anything but truth.

“Of whom are you talking, child?”

“Of Pedro Ohlsen; he is after me with a big gun; he means to shoot me!”

"Pedro Ohlsen!" exclaimed the mother in a burst of rage, and then laughed, and looked taller than ever. The child began to cry, and would have run away; but her mother rushed at her, her white teeth glittering like those of a beast of prey, clutched her shoulder and raised her from the floor.

"Did you tell him who you were?"

"Yes, yes, yes, yes!" and the child held up her hands imploringly.

At this the mother drew herself up to her full height, exclaiming, —

"And so he has found it out! What did he say?"

"He ran in after his gun; he meant to shoot me."

"*He shoot you!*" laughed Gunlaug, in bitter scorn.

Frightened and bespattered with soup, the child had stolen into a corner, where she stood wiping herself, amid her tears, when her mother again approached her.

"If you ever go to him," said she, seizing her daughter, and giving her a shaking, "or speak with him, or listen to him, God have mercy on you both! Tell him so from me!" she repeated, in a threatening tone, for the child did not answer at once.

“ Yes, yes, yes, yes ! ”

“ Tell him so from me ! ” she once more repeated, but softly now, and nodding her head with each word, she walked off.

The child washed herself, changed her clothes, and in Sunday attire sat down on the steps outside. But remembering the alarm she had just been in, she sobbed until the tears began to flow again.

“ Why do you cry, my child ? ” asked a voice in more kindly tones than she had ever heard from any one.

She looked up : before her stood a man of graceful build, with a noble countenance, and wearing spectacles. She rose at once ; for this was Hans Ödegaard, a young man, in whose presence the whole town stood up.

“ Why do you cry, my child ? ”

Looking up into his face, she told him that she and “ some other boys ” had meant to take apples from Pedro Ohlsen’s garden, but Pedro and the policeman had been after them, and then, on remembering that her mother had shaken her faith on the score of the shooting, she dared not speak of it, but drew a long sigh instead.

“ Is it possible,” said he, “ that a child of your age can take part in so great a sin ? ”

Petra stared at him; she had known very well that she had been doing wrong; but she was accustomed to having this indicated to her in the following manner: "You imp of darkness! You black woolly Satan!" Now she felt mortified.

"What a shame that you do not go to school and learn God's commandments about good and evil!"

She stood stroking her frock, and replied that her mother did not wish to have her go to school.

"You cannot even read, I suppose."

Yes, of course she could read.

He produced a small book and handed it to her. She glanced into it, then turned it round, and looked at the cover.

"I cannot read such fine print," said she.

But he insisted on her trying, and all at once she became surprisingly stupid; her eyes and her lips drooped, all her limbs became relaxed.

"G-o-d, God, t-h — God the L-o-r — God, the Lord, s-a — God, the Lord, said to M-M—" —

"Bless me! you cannot read yet! And you are a child of from ten to twelve years old. Would you not like to learn to read?"

She managed to drag out that she would very much like to do so.

“Then come with me ; we must set to work forthwith.”

She moved, but merely to look into the house.

“Yes, tell your mother,” said he.

The mother was just passing, and, seeing her child speak with a stranger, she came out on the flag-stone.

“He wants to teach me to read,” said the child, doubtfully, fixing her eyes on her mother.

Gunlaug made no reply, but, with arms akimbo, stood looking at Ödegaard.

“Your daughter is an ignorant child,” said he, “you cannot justify yourself before either God or man if you let her grow up in this way.”

“Who are you ?” asked Gunlaug, sharply.

“Hans Ödegaard, your priest’s son.”

Her face cleared a little; she had heard much good of him.

“From time to time when I have been at home, I have noticed this child,” he began once more. “To-day I have had my attention called to her afresh. She must no longer busy herself only with what is evil.”

“What is that to you ?” the mother’s face plainly expressed.

He calmly asked, however : “You surely expect her to learn something ?”

“No.”

A faint flush overspread his face.

“Why not?” he asked.

“Are people any better, do you think, for having learning?”

She had had but one experience,—to that she held fast.

“It astonishes me that any person can ask such a question.”

“No, indeed; I know they are no better for it,” and with this she started down the steps to put an end to this nonsense. But he stepped in her way.

“Here is a duty which you *must* not shirk,” said he. “You are an unwise mother.”

Gunlaug measured him from head to foot.

“Who told you what I am,” said she, and swept past him.

“You yourself this very moment; for had you been otherwise you must have seen that this child will go to ruin unless something be done.”

Gunlaug turned; her eye met his; she saw that he really meant what he said, and it frightened her. Hitherto she had only had sea-faring men and trades-people to deal with; such language as this was new to her.

“What do you want with the child?” she asked.

“To teach her what is needful for her soul’s salvation ; and then find out what she is destined to be.”

“My child shall be nothing but what I choose.”

“Yes, indeed, she shall ; she shall be what God chooses.”

Gunlaug stood mute.

“What do you mean by that?” said she, drawing nearer.

“I mean she must cultivate the faculties she is endowed with ; it is for this purpose God has given them to her.”

Now Gunlaug came close up to him : “Am not I, her mother, to have authority over her ?” she inquired, as if truly desirous of learning.

“You are ; but you must heed the counsel of others who know better than yourself ; you must consider the will of God.”

Gunlaug stood silent for a moment. “But if she learns too much !” said she. “The child of poor people,” she added, glancing tenderly at her daughter.

“If she learns too much for her station, she has in so doing attained a higher one,” he replied.

She at once caught the meaning of his words ; but she said, as though thinking aloud,

her gaze resting more and more sadly on the child the while:—

“That is dangerous.”

“That is not the point,” said he, mildly.

“The question is, what is right.”

“Into her vigorous eye there came a strange expression: she gave him another penetrating look; but there was so much sincerity in his voice, his words, and his face that Gunlaug felt herself defeated. She walked up to her child, laid her hands on her head, but could not speak.

“I will teach her from this day forth until she is confirmed,” said he, wishing to aid her;

“I mean to interest myself in this child.”

“And then you will take her away from me?”

He hesitated and looked inquiringly at her.

“Of course, you are far wiser than I; yet if you had not spoken in the name of the Lord”—She paused. She had been smoothing down her daughter’s hair; now she took the kerchief from her own neck and fastened it around Petra. This was the only sign she gave of her consent that the child should go with the young man; but she hastened behind the house as though she could not bear to see her go.

This behavior filled Hans Ödegaard with a

sudden alarm at what, in his youthful zeal, he had taken upon himself. The girl, on her part, was inspired with awe for the first person who had ever conquered her mother; and with this mutual fear these two set forth to begin the lessons.

From day to day it seemed to the young teacher that his pupil grew in intelligence and knowledge, and his conversations with her often took a peculiar direction. He would bring forward characters from the Bible and from secular history in such a manner as to point out the call given them by God. He would dwell on Saul, who roved wildly about; on David, the shepherd lad, who tended his father's flocks until Samuel came and laid his hands on him in the name of the Lord. Highest of all, though, was the call when the Lord Himself walked upon earth and extended it to fishermen. The poor fishermen rose and followed Him — to poverty and to death, but always joyfully, for the feeling that we are called supports us under every adversity.

This idea so pursued Petra that at last she could bear it no longer, and she asked him about her own calling. He gazed at her until she grew crimson, then replied, that through work we find our vocation; it may be modest and humble, but it exists for all.

Now a great zeal took possession of her; it gave the impulse of mature energy to her work its intensity entered into her play, and it made her grow pale and thin. Romantic longings filled her mind: to cut her hair short, dress herself as a boy, sally forth into the world and enter into its struggles! But when her teacher one day told her how pretty her hair was if she would but keep it in order, she became fond of her long hair, and for its sake was ready to sacrifice heroic fame.

After this it was more to her than ever before to be a girl, and her work progressed more calmly, while fitful dreams hovered over it.

CHAPTER III.

HANS ÖDEGAARD'S father had as a youth wandered out from the parish of Ödegaard, in the diocese of Bergen. People had interested themselves in him, and he was now a learned man and a stern preacher. He was, moreover, an authoritative person, not so much in speech as in action; for he "remembered well," as people said. This man who was so resolute in the execution of all his plans, was baffled in a quarter where he least expected it, and where it gave him the most pain.

He had three daughters and one son. The son, Hans, was the light of the school; the father himself prepared him for his studies and took daily delight therein. Hans had a friend whom he helped to win the place next to him in the school, and who therefore loved him beyond all else on earth save his own mother. They were comrades at school, and went together to the university; together they passed the first two examinations, and were to enter together on the preparation for their future

profession. One day when, after pursuing their appointed studies, they were coming merrily down the stairs, Hans, in a burst of good humor and glee, leaped on his comrade's back, but in so doing the latter fell, and death followed the fall a few days later. With his dying breath he begged his mother, who was a widow and with him was losing her only child, to take Hans, for love of him, as a son in his stead. The mother, however, died almost simultaneously with her son, but in accordance with her will the very considerable fortune she left fell to Hans.

It was a long time before Hans recovered from this shock. An extended journey abroad so far roused him as to enable him to resume his theological studies and carry them through; but he could not be persuaded to make any use of his degree.

His father's one hope had been to see him established as his assistant in the parish, but now he could not be prevailed on to enter the pulpit even once. He always made the same reply: he felt no call. This was so bitter a disappointment to the father that it added many years to his age. He had started late in life, was already an old man, and had labored hard, always with this goal in view. The son now

lived at ease in his handsome rooms in the upper story of the house ; while beneath, in the small study, beside the lamp that shone on the night of his old age, sat the old priest, ever at work. After the disappointment he had undergone, he neither could nor would take a stranger to help him, neither would he follow his son's advice and resign his charge ; therefore he knew no rest, summer or winter, while his son each year took a longer journey abroad. When at home he associated with no one, except that he dined at his father's table in more or less silence ; but if any one spoke to him he responded with such superior soundness of judgment and zeal for the truth that the conversation was apt to become embarrassing. He never went to church ; but he gave more than half his income to benevolent purposes, and always with the most definite instructions as to its use.

This munificent generosity was so at variance with the less liberal habits of the small town that it overwhelmed every one. When we add to this young Ödegaard's reserve, his frequent foreign journeys, and the shyness all felt in addressing him, it can readily be understood that he seemed a mysterious being to whom was ascribed all possible gifts as well as his superior judgment. When this man condescended to

make the fisher maiden the object of his daily care, she became ennobled in the eyes of all.

Now others, too, wanted to take her under their patronage, especially ladies. One day Petra came to her teacher, clad in all the hues of the rainbow: she had donned all her gifts and thought she would now surely be to his taste, as he always wished her to look neat. But scarcely had he caught a glimpse of her than he forbade her ever to accept any presents; he called her vain and silly; told her she aimed only at worthless goals, and took pleasure alone in folly. When she came to him the next morning, her eyes red with weeping, he took her with him for a walk out of town. As they went he told her about David, as it was his wont to take up now this, now that historical character, and to invest familiar topics with new interest. First he depicted David in his youth, and told how he entered on life, beautiful in person, rich in powers, and with unquestioning faith. Thus, ere he was a man, he shared the honors of a triumphal procession. From a shepherd he was called to be a king: he had dwelt in caves, but ended in building Jerusalem. Clad in fair attire, he played the harp to soothe the stricken Saul, but when, a king himself, he was ill and clothed

in the garments of remorse, he drew music from his harp-strings and sang to soothe himself. His great deeds accomplished, he sought repose in sin; then came the prophet and punishment, and once more he was a child. David, who with his songs of praise could lift up all the chosen people of the Lord, lay crushed himself at the Lord's feet. Was he most to be admired when, crowned with victory, he danced before the ark to his own songs, or when in his closet he implored mercy from the chastening hand?

Petra had a dream the night after this conversation, which through her whole life she never forgot. She thought she was riding on a white horse in a triumphal procession, but at the same time she was also dancing before the horse in rags.

One evening, some time later, as Petra sat by the edge of the wood, conning her lesson, Pedro Ohlsen whom, since that day in the garden, she had seen coming nearer and nearer to her, walked close by her and, with a strange smile, whispered: —

“Good evening!”

Although years had now elapsed, she retained so lively a recollection of her mother's command not to speak to him, that she made no reply. Day after day, however, he walked

past her in the same way, and always with the same greeting; at length she came to look for him when he did not come. Ere long he fell to asking some trifling question as he passed, soon this became two, and finally the questions grew into conversations. One day, after one of these, he slipped a silver dollar into her lap and hastened away, overjoyed at what he had done. Now it was contrary to her mother's orders to speak with him, and contrary to Ødegaard's to accept gifts from any one. The first injunction she had gradually disobeyed, and was now reminded of it because through this transgression she had been led to disregard the second also. In order to get rid of the money she found a person who helped her spend it; but in spite of every effort it was not possible for them to eat more than four marks,¹ worth. When too late she was filled with remorse for having wasted the dollar instead of giving it back. The mark which still remained in her pocket scorched like fire and seemed as if it must burn a hole through her clothes; she took it and flung it into the sea. Even then she did not get rid of the dollar. Her thoughts were branded with it. Confession might set her free, she thought; but her mother's appalling wrath at the time of her

¹ Five marks make a dollar.

last effort, and Ödegaard's heartfelt, trusting goodness, were equally calculated to frighten her from it. While her mother observed nothing, Ödegaard soon discovered that she was wrestling with something that made her unhappy. In all tenderness, he inquired one day what it was, and when in reply she burst into tears, he took it for granted there must be want at home, and gave her ten dollars. Now it made a deep impression on her that notwithstanding her fault against him, she had received money from him, and having besides received money which she could openly give to her mother, honest money, she felt as though pardoned from her guilt, and yielded to the most excessive joy. She took his hand in both of hers, she thanked him, she laughed, she jumped up and down on the spot where she stood, ecstasy beamed through her tears, while she fixed her eyes on him with much the same look that a dog bestows on the master whom he is about to accompany on a walk. He knew her no longer. She who had always sat lost in his words, wielded the power herself now. For the first time he felt a strong, wild nature unfolding itself before him, for the first time he felt the well-spring of life gushing up within him and flooding him with its roseate stream,

and he started back, his face flaming, but she dashed out of the house and sped up the hills to take the road from the town home. There she laid the money on the bread griddle before her mother, and fell on her neck.

"Who gave you the money?" asked the mother, her anger already rising.

"It was Ödegaard, mother; he is the grandest man in the world."

"What am I to do with it?"

"I am sure I do not know; but, oh, mother, if you only knew" —

She threw herself on her mother's neck once more. Now she was not afraid; now she would confess all. But her mother shook her off impatiently.

"Would you have me accept alms? Take the money back to him at once! If you have made him believe I need help, you have lied."

"But, mother" —

"Take the money back to him this instant, I say, or I will go to him myself and fling it at him, at *him* who has taken my child from me!"

The mother's lips quivered after the last word. Petra drew back, growing paler and paler, softly opened the door and noiselessly left the house. Before she was aware of it the ten dollar note was torn to fragments in her

fingers. The discovery of this led to an outburst of wrath against her mother. Ödegaard must know nothing of this, though, — but, yes, he should know everything. There should be no concealments from him!

A moment later she was in his home telling him that her mother had refused to accept the money, and that she in her anger at being compelled to bring it back to him had torn the note to pieces. She would have said more, but he received her coldly and bade her go home again, admonishing her to be obedient to her mother, even where it was hard to be so. This seemed very strange to her; for this much she knew, that *he* did not do what his father wished beyond all else! On the way home she broke down entirely, and just at that moment she met Pedro Ohlsen. She had shunned him all this time, and was about to do the same now, for he was the cause of her bad luck.

“Where have you been?” asked he, joining her. “Has anything gone wrong with you?”

The surging billows within her breast had risen so high that they might toss her whither they would, and as she thought of the matter, she could not understand why her mother should forbid her to have any intercourse with this man, of all others. It was doubtless a mere whim, now as well as before.

“Do you know what I have done?” said he, almost humbly, as she paused. “I have bought a sail-boat for you; I thought you might have a fancy for sailing,” and he laughed.

His kindness, which savored somewhat of the prayer of the needy, was especially calculated to touch her just now; she nodded, — and then he grew agitated, and eagerly whispered to her to go round the outskirts of the town and follow the avenue to the right straight to the large, yellow boat-house; he would meet her behind it and no one could see them there. She started off, and he came after her, joyful, yet deferential as an aged child, and led her to the boat. They sailed about for a time in the gentle breeze, then laying to alongside a rocky island, they made the boat fast and clambered ashore. He had with him all sorts of dainties for her, which he gave her with a timorous joy, and he brought forth his flute and played for her. The sight of his happiness made her for a time forget her own trouble, and as there crept over her the melancholy always excited by the pleasure of weak people, she also found herself growing fond of him.

From that day forth she had a new and perpetual secret from her mother, and this soon led her into keeping her outside of everything

Gunlaug asked no questions; she wholly trusted unless her confidence were once utterly shaken.

But from Ödegaard also Petra had concealments from that day; for she received many presents from Pedro Ohlsen. Yet Ödegaard did not question her either, but day by day his instructions became more formal. Thus Petra was shared by three people; with none of them could she speak of the others and she had something to hide from each.

In the mean while she had grown up, without being herself aware of it, and one day Ödegaard informed her that she must be confirmed.

This announcement filled her with great disquietude; for she knew that with confirmation her instructions would end, and what would become of her then? Her mother was having an attic built to her house; after confirmation Petra was to have a room of her own; the incessant hammering and pounding were painful reminders to her. Ödegaard saw her grow more and more silent, occasionally he saw also that she had been weeping. Under such circumstances the preparation for confirmation made a deep impression on her, although Ödegaard, with tender solicitude, avoided everything calculated to rouse her emotions. For this reason he concluded his instructions about a fortnight

before the time appointed for confirmation, by briefly informing her that this would be the last lesson. By this he meant the last with *him*; for he certainly intended to care further for her, but through others. She remained, however, motionless in her seat. The color forsook her face, she could not take her eyes from him, and involuntarily touched, he hastened to give a reason.

“To be sure, all young girls are not grown up when they are confirmed; but you surely feel that such is the case with you.”

Had she been standing in the glow of a great fire she could not have become rosier than she did at these words; her bosom heaved, her eyes grew restless and filled with tears, and driven to extremity he hastened to say:—

“Would you, after all, rather continue?”

Only when it was too late did he realize what he had proposed; it was wrong; he would take it back; but she was already raising her eyes to his face, she was not saying “yes” with her lips, and yet more forcibly she could not have expressed it. To excuse what he had done to himself by seeking a pretext, he asked:

“I presume there is something you especially wish to turn your attention to, something you” — he bowed low over her — “feel a call for, Petra?”

“No!” she answered, so abruptly that he flushed crimson, and then, cooling off, fell back into the reflections that, for years, had weighed on him, and which her unexpected reply had roused again.

That she possessed a strong individuality he had never doubted from the time when she was a child, and he used to see her marching about singing at the head of the town's boy-companies. But the longer he taught her the less he comprehended the nature of her endowments. Her every emotion betokened their existence; all that she thought, all that she desired, was revealed by mind and body at once with ardent intensity, and over all were sparkling flashes of beauty. But put into words, and especially into writing, it became mere childishness. She seemed to be pure fantasy; yet he, to be sure, ascribed this chiefly to restlessness. She was very industrious, but her studies aimed less at learning than at advancing; what might be on the next page was most prominent in her mind. She had deep religious feeling, but as the priest expressed himself, “no foundation for a religious life,” and Ödegaard felt troubled about her. He stood again at the starting-point, his thoughts involuntarily bearing him to the flagstone where he had assumed the charge of her,

and he heard her mother's sharp voice laying the responsibility on him because he had named the Lord. After pacing the floor several times, he regained his composure.

"I am going abroad now," said he, with a certain shyness; "I have asked my sisters to take an interest in you during my absence, and when I come back we will try what further we can do. Farewell! We shall meet again, no doubt, before I start."

He then walked so hastily into the next room that she had not even time to grasp his hand.

She saw him again, where she had least expected it, and that was in the pulpit, near the choir just in front of her, as she stood among the girls, on the church floor, to be confirmed. She was so excited over this that her thoughts were long absent from the sacred rite for which she had prepared with humility and prayer. Yes, even Ödegaard's old father gazed long at his son, as the latter came forward to open the service. Soon Petra was to be once more startled in church; for who should she see sitting rather farther down the aisle, in stiff, new clothes, but Pedro Ohlsen! He was just stretching his neck that he might look over the heads of the boys at the group of girls and get a glimpse of her. He drew back again at once,

but she saw him repeatedly thrust up his head, with its sparse covering of hair, and each time promptly withdraw it. This called off her thoughts, she did not want to see, and yet she saw, and *there* — just as all the others were deeply affected, many of them in tears — Petra was terrified at seeing Pedro rise up, eyes and mouth wide open and rigid, paralyzed with fear, and powerless to sit down or move away; for opposite him, drawn up to her full height, stood Gunlaug. Petra shuddered as she looked at her, for she was as white as the altar-cloth. Her curly black hair seemed to bristle, while her eyes suddenly acquired a repellent power, as though they would say: “Away from her! what would you with her!” He cowered on the bench beneath this look, and a moment later stole away from the church.

After this Petra found peace, and the further the service progressed the more thoroughly did she enter into it. And when she returned from the altar, after having taken her vow, and gazed through her tears at Ödegaard, as the one who was nearest all her good purposes, she vowed in her heart that she would never bring his trust in her to shame. Those faithful eyes, which so beamingly met hers, seemed to implore this of her; but after she had taken her

place and would once more have sought his eyes, he was gone. She soon went home with her mother, who on the way let fall the words, —

“Now I have done my part; now let the Lord do his!”

When they had dined together, they two alone, the mother said furthermore, as she rose : —

“ Well, we must go over, I suppose, to him, — the priest’s son. I do not know, it is true, how what *he* has undertaken is going to turn out, but I am quite sure he meant well. Put on your things again, child ! ”

The road to church, they two had so often trodden together, lay above the town. In the street they had never before been seen together ; the mother, indeed, had scarcely been there since her return to the town. Now she turned immediately down toward the street, she would pass through its entire length, she wanted to walk there with her grown-up daughter.

On the afternoon of a confirmation Sunday. in a little town like this, everybody is in motion, either passing from house to house with congratulations, or walking up and down the street to see and to be seen. There is a pause

at every step, greetings are interchanged, hands shaken, and glad tidings delivered; the poor man's child may be met in the cast-off garments of the rich, and is out to show his gratitude. The sea-faring men of the town in foreign finery, with their caps lightly perched on their heads, and the fops of the town, the store clerks, with a bow for every one, walk about in groups; the half-grown boys of the Latin school, each arm in arm with his best friend in the world, lounge after them, passing their boyish criticisms. But all must to-day, in the innermost recesses of their hearts, give way before the lion of the town, the young merchant, the richest man of the place, Yngve Vold, who had but just returned from Spain, all ready to take charge, on the morrow, of his mother's extensive fishing trade. With a light hat on his fair hair he flashed through the streets, so that the young people who had just been confirmed were almost forgotten; one and all gave him greetings of welcome; he spoke with every one, smiled at every one; up and down the street his light hat perched on his fair hair could be seen, his bright laughter heard. When Petra and her mother came out, he was the first person they stumbled on; and as though they had really stumbled against him, he drew back from Petra, whom he did not recognize.

She had grown tall, not as tall as her mother, but beyond the height of most women, lithe in her movements, refined, and fearless ; she was her mother and not her mother in continually changing flashes. Even the young merchant, who persisted in following them, could no longer attract wholly to himself the eyes of the loungers ; these two, mother and daughter, presented a more strange appearance. They walked rapidly along with greetings for none, because they were seldom saluted by others than sailors ; but they came back still more rapidly, because they had learned that Ödegård had just started from home for the steamer that was then about sailing. Petra, in especial, was in great haste ; she must, she must, have a chance to speak with him and bear him her greetings and thanks before he went away ; it was very wrong of him to leave her thus. She saw none of those whose eyes were fixed on her ; she saw only the smoke of the steamer curling above the house-tops, and it seemed to her to be passing away. When they reached the wharf, the steamer was just putting off ; and choked with tears she hastened down the avenue. As it had taken the steamer some time to turn in the harbor, she arrived in time to run down on the beach.

mount on a stone, and wave her handkerchief. Her mother was left in the avenue, and would not go down; Petra stood waving her handkerchief; higher and higher she waved it, but no one waved to her in return.

She could endure no more, and wept so violently that she was forced to take the upper road home. Her mother went with her, but walked by her side in silence. The loft chamber her mother had this day given her, where she had slept for the first time last night, and where this morning she had put on her new clothes, so full of joy, received her this evening dissolved in tears and without a single glance for anything. She would not go down where the sailors and guests had arrived; she took off her confirmation attire, and sat down on her bed until night came on apace, and it seemed to her that to be grown up was the most wretched thing that could happen.

CHAPTER IV.

SHORTLY after the confirmation she went one day to see Ödegaard's sisters, but soon became conscious that Ödegaard had made a grave mistake ; for the priest did not deign to notice her, and his daughters, both older than Ödegaard, were cold and formal. They contented themselves with giving her brief instructions from their brother as to how she was now to occupy herself. The whole forenoon, it seemed, she was to take part in the domestic duties of a house in the outskirts of the town, and in the afternoon attend sewing-school ; she was to sleep at home and have her supper and breakfast there. She did all that had been planned for her to do, and took pleasure in it as long as it was a novelty, but later, and especially when summer came, she found it irksome ; for during that season she had been in the habit of sitting in the forest the whole day long, and there she had read her books, which she now missed from the bottom of her heart, as she missed Ödegaard and missed companion-

ship. The result was that she took the latter wherever it was to be found.

About that time, for instance, there came a young girl to the sewing-school, who went by the name of Lise Let ; that is to say, her name was Lise, but not Let, for Let was the name of a young midshipman who had been home in the Christmas vacation, and had become engaged to Lise on the ice when she was a mere school-girl. Lise would stake her life that this was not true, and the tears came the moment it was mentioned ; nevertheless, she was ever after called Lise Let. Fragile little Lise Let wept often and laughed often ; but whether she wept or laughed her thoughts ran on love. New, strange thoughts, swarming like bees, soon filled the whole sewing-school. If a hand was stretched out for the reel, it was going courting, and the reel favored or rejected the suit ; the needle became engaged to the thread, and the thread sacrificed itself, stitch by stitch, for the cruel one ; if a girl pricked herself she was shedding her heart's blood, and the one who changed needles was faithless. Did two girls whisper together, it must be about something remarkable that had happened to them ; soon two more would fall to whispering, then two more ; each one had her confidant, and there

were a thousand secrets. It was more than Petra could endure.

One afternoon, about dusk, in a misty rain, Petra was standing, with a large kerchief over her head, outside of her home, peering into the passage, where stood a young sailor, whistling a waltz. She held the kerchief with both hands tight under her chin, so that only her eyes and nose were visible; but the sailor promptly discovered that she was blinking at him, and he speedily sprang down to the spot where she stood.

"Listen, Gunnar; do you want to take a walk?"

"Why, it is raining."

"Pshaw! what if it is!"

And so they went to a small house farther up the mountain.

"Go in and buy me some cakes, the kind with whipped cream on!"

"You are always wanting cakes!"

"The kind with whipped cream on!"

He brought her some. Thrusting out one hand from under her kerchief, she took them and walked on eating. When they had made their way up beyond the town, she said, handing him a piece of cake, —

"See here, Gunnar! We have always been

fond of each other, we two ; I have always cared more for you than for any of the boys ! You do not believe it ? But I can assure you it is true, Gunnar ! And now you are second mate, and you may soon be in command of a ship. Now, it seems to me, you ought to be engaged, Gunnar. — Dear me, are you not eating the cake ? ”

“ No, I have commenced chewing tobacco. ”

“ Well, then, what have you to say to this ? ”

“ Oh, yes ; but there is no hurry about it ! ”

“ There is no hurry about it ? Why, you are going away day after to-morrow. ”

“ Yes, but I will come back again, I hope. ”

“ But you cannot be sure, let me tell you, whether I shall be at your disposal then, for you do not know where I may be by that time. ”

“ It is to be you ; is it ? ”

“ Yes, Gunnar, I should think you might have known that ; but you have always been so stupid, that is why you had to be a sailor. ”

“ Oh, I am not sorry for that ; it is a pretty good thing to be a sailor. ”

“ Yes, to be sure ; your mother has a ship of her own. But what answer have you now ? You are so dull. ”

“ Well, what answer should I have ? ”

“What answer should you have? Ha, ha, ha, perhaps you do not want me!”

“Oh, Petra, you know very well I want you. But I do not believe I can be sure of you!”

“Indeed, Gunnar, I will be very, very true to you!”

He stood still a moment.

“Let me look you in the face, Petra!”

“Why so?”

“I want to see whether you really mean it.”

“Do you think I would trifle with you, Gunnar?”

She was angry, and loosened her kerchief.

“Well, Petra, if it is real serious earnest, then give me a kiss on it; for it is plain enough what that means.”

“Are you mad?” She closed the kerchief and walked on.

“Wait, Petra, wait! You do not understand this. If we are sweethearts” —

“Oh, how absurd you are!”

“Why, I ought to know what is customary, I should think, for so far as worldly experience is concerned, I am far in advance of you. Think of all I have seen” —

“Yes, you have seen like a dunce, and you talk just as you have seen.”

“Come, then, what do you think it means to

be engaged lovers, Petra? I should really like to know *that*. To chase each other up the hills does not amount to anything."

"No, that is very true." She laughed and stood still. "But now listen, Gunnar! while we stand here and take breath. — Ugh! — I am going to tell you how engaged lovers act. As long as you are in town, you must wait outside the sewing-school, and go home with me all the way to the door, each evening, and if I am out anywhere else you must wait in the street until I come. When you go away, though, you must write to me, and buy things to send to me. Ah, that is true: we must have a couple of rings with *your* name in one and *mine* in the other, and then the year and the day of the month; but as I have no money you must buy them both."

"That I will with pleasure, but" —

"What are you after with your *but* again?"

"Good gracious! I only meant that I must have the measure of your finger."

"Well, that you can have at once." She pulled up a blade of grass and bit it off the right size after she had measured her finger.

"There, do not throw it away!"

He wrapped it in a piece of paper, and put the paper in his pocket-book; she watched him until the pocket-book was entirely out of sight.

"Let us go; it would be tiresome to stay here any longer."

"Well, upon my word, I think this is rather shabby, Petra!"

"Very well, old fellow, if you do not want it so, it is all one to me!"

"Why, of course I want it so. It is not that; but am I not so much as to take hold of your hand?"

"What for?"

"As a proof that we are really engaged!"

"Such nonsense! Pray, what proof is there in shaking hands? However, you may take my hand if you like; here it is. — No, I thank you, not any squeezing, sir!"

She drew her hand back again under the kerchief; but now suddenly she raised the kerchief with both hands, and her whole face was displayed to view.

"If you tell any one, Gunnar, I will say it is not true. So now you know that."

Here she laughed and started down the hill again. After a while she stopped and said, —

"To-morrow the sewing-school will not be over before nine o'clock; then you must be waiting behind the garden, remember."

"Very good."

"Well, now you must go!"

“ Will you not even shake hands with me at parting? ”

“ I cannot see why you are always wanting my hand. No, you shall not have it. Good-by ! ” she called out, and sprang from him.

The next evening Petra contrived to be the last at the sewing-school. It was nearly ten o'clock when she left, but — when she got outside the garden Gunnar was not there. She had thought of all kinds of mishaps, but not of this ; it hurt her so that she waited merely to give him a sound rating when he did come. She did not lack good company, however, as she walked up and down behind the garden for the merchant's singing society had just commenced practising in a house near by, before open windows ; a Spanish song floated alluringly to her on the mild evening air, wafting her away to Spain, where she heard her own praises sung from an open balcony. Spain was the goal of her yearnings ; for every summer brought the dark Spanish ships into the harbor, the Spanish songs into the streets, and on Ödegaard's walls hung a series of beautiful pictures from Spain. He was there now, most likely, and she with him ! But in a trice she was brought back to reality ; for there, behind the apple-tree, at last appeared Gunnar. She

sprang toward — not Gunnar, but the light hat on the fair hair, just returned from Spain.

“Ha, ha, ha, ha!” rang out the bright laughter. “Do you take me for some one else?”

She eagerly denied this, and indignantly hastened away; but he ran after her, talking, all the while he ran, with uncommon rapidity and with that indistinct accent people acquire who use several languages.

“You see I can keep pace with you, for I run astonishingly well; it is no use trying. I *must* speak with you, for this is the eighth evening I have been walking here.”

“The eighth evening!”

“The eighth evening, ha, ha, ha! I should be willing to wait here eight more, for we suit each other admirably; do we not? It is no use for you to run, I will not let you go; for now you are tired, I see.”

“No, I am not.”

“Yes, indeed, you are!”

“No, I am not.”

“Yes, you are. Speak, then, if you are not tired.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Ha, ha, ha, ha! Why, that is not speaking.”

And then they stood still. They exchanged

some teasing words, half in jest, half in earnest ; then he began to speak in glowing terms of Spain, picture followed picture in rapid succession ; he ended by cursing the small town at their feet. His first remarks Petra followed with beaming eyes ; the second made her ears tingle, while her eyes wandered up and down a gold chain, wound twice about his neck.

“ Just look ! ” said he, rapidly, as he drew forth the end of the chain, to which was attached a gold cross. I brought this with me to-night to show the singing society ; it came from Spain. You must hear its history.”

And then he told it.

“ When I was in the south of Spain I went to a shooting match, and won this prize. It was handed to me with these words : ‘ Take it home with you to Norway and bestow it, in token of the respectful homage of Spanish cavaliers, on the fairest woman in your native land. ’ Then came shouts and fanfares, banners waved, cavaliers applauded, and I accepted the gift.”

“ Oh, how delightful ! ” burst out Petra ; for before her vision there rose a beaming picture of the Spanish festival, with the Spanish colours and songs, while the dark-hued Spaniards stood at the foot of vine-clad hills in the even-

ing sunlight, sending their thoughts to the fairest woman in the land of snow. He was a good-natured young fellow, in spite of his strange excitability and self-conceit; and he stood there now gratifying her eagerness to hear his story.

His one picture after the other increased her longing, and, thoroughly transported into that wondrous land, she began to hum a Spanish song she had recently heard, and gradually to move her feet in time to it.

"What? you can dance Spanish dances?" cried he.

"Yes," she hummed, in dancing rhythm, snapping her fingers to imitate the castanets; for she had seen the Spanish sailors dance.

"To you belongs the gift of the Spanish cavaliers," he burst forth, as though illumined by a radiant thought. "You are the most beautiful woman I have met!"

He had raised the gold chain from his neck, and, with a light hand, flung it several times around hers before she understood him. But *when* she understood, that deep blush of shame that was peculiarly her own, suffused her face, and the tears filled her eyes, so that *he*, who had fallen from surprise to surprise, was now for the first time abashed at what he had done

and not knowing what further he wanted, only feeling that he ought now to leave, went away.

At midnight she still stood by her open loft window with the chain in her hand. The friendly autumn night lay spread over town and fjord and distant mountains; from the street resounded the Spanish song; for the singing society had gone home with Yngve Vold. Word for word the song could be heard; it was about a beautiful wreath. Only two of the voices sang the words; the others imitated a guitar accompaniment:—

“ Take this wreath, thou fairest maiden,
All with fragrant kisses laden!
Freshest leaves and fluttering grasses,
To the brightest of young lasses.
Snowy lilies, frail and light,
To a flower more pure and white;
Crimson buds, that long to blow,
To a rose of richer glow.
Blossoms sweetest, blossoms rarest,
To the best beloved, the fairest!
Take this wreath, thou dearest maiden,
All with fragrant kisses laden!”

When she opened her eyes the next morning, she thought she had been wandering in a forest filled through and through with sunshine, and where all the trees were of the kind we call golden shower,¹ and hung in long, bright

¹ The laburnum tree.

clusters that almost touched her as she swept through. At once she remembered the chain, seized it, and hung it around her neck. Next she put on a black kerchief, and placed the chain over it; for it looked better on black. Still sitting on her bed, she reflected her image in a small hand-mirror: — could it be possible that she was so beautiful? She stood up to arrange her hair, and take another look at herself in the glass; but, remembering her mother, who as yet knew nothing, she made haste; she must go right down and tell her about it. Just as she had finished dressing, and was about hanging the chain round her neck again, she fell to wondering what her mother would say and what all the people would say, and what she should answer when they asked why she wore this costly chain. As the question would be a very reasonable one, the thought kept repeating itself with more and more seriousness, until at last she found a little box, laid the chain in it, thrust the box in her pocket, and felt, for the first time in her life, poor.

She did not go to her usual duties that morning. Above the town, near the spot where she had received the chain, she sat down with it in her hand, feeling as if she had stolen it.

That evening she waited behind the garden

even longer for Yngve Vold than she had waited the evening before for Gunnar; she wanted to return the chain. But just as the vessel Gunnar had gone with had unexpectedly set sail the day before, owing to a splendid cargo it had had assigned to it in the adjoining town, Yngve Vold, who owned the ship, had gone off that day on the same errand. He took with him several commissions, and so he remained absent three weeks.

During these three weeks the chain had gradually found its way from her pocket to the bureau drawer, and from there again into an envelope, the envelope being put away in a secret compartment. Meanwhile, Petra herself had passed from one humiliating discovery to another. For the first time she became fully aware of the great distance between her and the aristocratic ladies of the town; any of them could have worn the chain without fear of being questioned about where it came from. To none of them, however, would Yngve Vold have dared offer it without at the same time offering his hand: this was only possible with the fisher maiden. If he had wanted to give her anything, he might have chosen something she could make use of; but he had wanted to insult her all the more deeply by giving her

what she could not possibly wear. The story about the "fairest woman" must be a romance, for had the chain been bestowed on her for that reason, it would not have come to her stealthily and by night.

Anger and shame gnawed all the more deeply, as she no longer had any one in whom to confide. No wonder, then, that the first time she again met him, about whom revolved all these indignant and humiliating thoughts, she blushed so deeply that he could not but misconstrue it, and, conscious of this, she blushed still more.

She hurriedly turned home, seized the chain, and although it was yet day-time she sat down above the town to wait for him. Now he should have it back. She felt sure he would come, for he, too, had blushed on seeing her, and he had been absent the whole time. But soon these same thoughts began to speak in his behalf. He would not have grown so red had she been indifferent to him; he would have come sooner had he been at home. Twilight was creeping on apace; for during these three weeks the days had grown very much shorter. But as darkness closes about us our thoughts often undergo a change. She was sitting right above the road among the trees; she could see,

but not be seen. When time wore on and he did not come, contending emotions flamed up ; now in anger, now in alarm, she listened ; she heard every one who came that way long ere he came in sight, but it was never he. Birds shifting their perches among the foliage while dozing, startled her, so on the strain was she ; every sound from town, every cry attracted her attention. A large ship was weighing anchor amid the singing of the sailors. It was to be towed out to-night that it might take advantage of the first morning breeze. How she longed to sail with it out on the wide ocean. The song of the sailors, as they hoisted the sails, became her own. The sound of the capstan gave her strength ; for what purpose ; whither would it bear her ?

There was the light hat in the road, right in front of her. She sprang to her feet, and, without delay, darted off, and as she ran she remembered that she ought not to have run away ; this was error upon error, and so she paused. As he approached the spot where she stood among the trees, she was panting so that he heard every breath, and the same power she had exercised over him on their previous meeting through her daring, she now exercised through her fear. He stood looking at her, shy, even bewildered, and whispered, —

“Do not be afraid.”

But he saw that she was trembling. Then he thought to give her confidence by taking her hand; but at the first contact with his hand she sprang up as if on fire, and off she darted again, while he was left behind.

She did not run far, her breath gave out; there was a throbbing and burning in her temples; her heart seemed ready to burst; she pressed her hands against it and listened. She heard a step in the grass, a rustling in the foliage; he was coming, and right toward her. Did he see her? No, he did not! Yes, he did, though! No, he was passing by! She was not afraid, that was not what was the matter; but she had been wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, and her strength giving way with the tension, she sank down weary, exhausted.

After a long while, she got up and walked slowly down the slope, paused, and then walked on again as though she had no definite goal. When she again reached the road, he was sitting patiently waiting there, and now he rose. She had not seen him before; it seemed as if she had been walking in a fog; not a word escaped her, nor did she stir; she only put her hands before her eyes and wept. This affected Yngve Vold to such a degree that his usually

busy tongue was lamed ; but at last he said, with singular firmness : —

“ I will speak with my mother this evening ; to-morrow everything shall be settled, and in a few days you shall go abroad in view of becoming my wife.”

He waited for an answer ; he expected, at all events, that she would look up : but even this she did not do. He interpreted this in his own way : “ You do not answer ? You cannot ! Rely on me ; for from this moment you are mine ! Good-night ! ” and he walked on.

She stood there as if in a cloud of mist. A feeble sense of alarm glided in and strove to part this ; but the mist closed about her again.

With a power equal to that which Yngve Vold had exercised on her thoughts during the past three weeks, did this new wonder pave the way for a new series of dream images. He was the richest man of the town, belonged to its oldest family, and he wanted to raise her to his own level. This was such an unexpected change from all she had been dwelling on during the long period of suffering and indignation, that it was calculated to make her happy at once. She grew more and more so, however, after she had thoroughly reviewed her new and, in every respect, overwhelming circum-

stances. She saw herself the equal of every one and near the goal of all her vague longings. Beyond all else she saw Yngve Vold's largest vessel towed out as a flag-ship on her wedding day; she saw it, after sending forth salutes and fireworks, take the newly-married couple on board, and bear them to Spain, where glowed the bridal sun.

When she awoke the next morning, the servant-girl came up and announced to her that it was half-past eleven o'clock. Petra was most ravenously hungry, had food brought to her, called for more; her head ached, she was weary, and fell asleep once more. When she awoke again about three o'clock in the afternoon, she felt quite well. Her mother came up and said she had undoubtedly slept off an illness; she always did so herself. Now, though, it was time to get up and go to sewing-school. Petra was sitting upright in bed, her head supported by her arm; without looking up she replied that she was not going to sewing-school any more. Thinking that very likely she was still somewhat confused, the mother went downstairs after a package and a letter which a ship-boy had brought.

Why, here were actually presents already! Petra, who had lain down again, started up in

haste, and, as soon as she was alone, opened, with a certain solemnity, first the package — it contained a pair of French shoes. Rather disappointed she was about to put them away from her, when she felt that the toes were heavy. She thrust in her hand and drew forth from one a small parcel, wrapped in fine paper ; it was a gold bracelet : from the other, likewise, a parcel neatly done up ; it was a pair of French gloves ; and from the right glove again she drew forth a paper parcel containing two plain gold rings. “Already !” thought Petra, her heart throbbing wildly. She looked for the inscription, and, sure enough, read in one, “Petra,” with the year and day of the month ; and in the other, “Gunnar.” She grew pale, flung the rings and the whole parcel on the floor as if she had been burned, and tore open the letter. It was dated Calais, and read thus :

DEAR PETRA, — We have just arrived here, with a fair breeze from latitude 61 to 54, and later with a strong gale, which is unusual even for better vessels than ours, although it is a gallant ship under sail. But now I must tell you that all the way I have been thinking of you and what last happened between us two, and it was so aggravating to me not to be able

to take a proper leave of you that I went on board feeling quite out of sorts ; but I have not forgotten you since, except for a moment, now and then, for a sailor has a hard time of it. But now we have reached this place, and I have spent all my pay on presents for you, as you told me to do, and it took all the money mother gave me, too, so now I have nothing left. If I can get leave I will be with you as quickly as the presents ; for as long as we keep this secret, I can never feel sure about others, especially young men, of whom there are many ; but I am bound to have it sure, so that no one will have an excuse, and that all will have to beware of me. You can easily choose a better lover than I, for you can have whom you please ; but you can never get one who is more faithful, — that is what I am. Now I will close, for I have used up two sheets of paper, and the letters are growing large ; for this is the hardest thing I have to do ; but still I do it, since you wish it. And now, in conclusion, I must say that I take it for granted that you were in earnest ; for if you were not in earnest it would be a great shame, and bring unhappiness to many.

GUNNAR ASK,

Second mate on the brig The Norse Consti-
tution.

A great fear took possession of her. In the twinkling of an eye she was out of bed and dressed. She felt that she must go out, as if counsel might somewhere be found, for everything had become confused, uncertain, dangerous. The more she thought of it, the more entangled became the thread: some one must help her unravel it, or she could never get loose! But in whom dared she confide? It could be none other than her mother. When, after a long struggle, she stood in the kitchen beside her, flushed, tearful, but strong in her resolve to give perfect confidence that she might gain perfect help, her mother said, without looking round and so without noticing Petra's countenance, —

“He has just now been here; he **has** come home again.”

“Who?” whispered Petra, clinging to the nearest object to keep from falling; for if Gunnar had come already all hope was destroyed. She knew Gunnar; he was dull and good-natured; but once aroused to passion, he lost all self-control.

“You are to come there at once, he said.”

“There?” Petra trembled, for it flashed over her that he must have told his mother everything; and now what was to be done?

“ Yes, to the parsonage,” said her mother.

“ To the parsonage ? Is it Ödegaard who is come home ? ”

Her mother now turned toward her.

“ Yes ; who else ? ”

“ Ödegaard ! ” exulted Petra, and the storm of joy which broke over her purified the atmosphere at once. “ Ödegaard is come, Ödegaard ! O God in Heaven, he is come ! ”

She sprang from the door and across the fields. She stormed forward, she laughed, she shouted aloud ; it was him, him, she needed ; had he been at home, no evil would have occurred. With him she was safe ; if she but thought of his exalted, glowing countenance, his gentle voice ; yes, even the peaceful rooms he occupied, with their rich supply of pictures, she grew more calm, and felt secure once more. She took time to compose herself. Town and landscape were flooded with light in the declining autumn evening, especially the fjord lay in strong radiance ; in the sound beyond was curling away the last smoke from the steamer that had brought Ödegaard. Ah, only to know that he was home again did her good, made her feel happy, strong, capable once more. She prayed God to come to her aid that Ödegaard might never leave her alone again. And, as if

transported by this hope, she at that moment saw him coming toward her. He had known which way she would take and had come out to meet her. This touched her; she sprang toward him, seized both his hands, and kissed them. He was embarrassed, and seeing some one approach in the distance, he drew her from the road, up among the trees, holding fast to her hands, and all the way she kept saying, —

“How delightful that you are come! Ah, I cannot believe it is you! You must never go away again! Do not leave me — ah! do not leave me!”

Here the tears streamed from her eyes; he drew her head gently to him that he might hide them. He wanted to quiet her; for it was needful for him that she should be calm, She nestled up to him as a bird beneath the wing that is uplifted for its shelter, and fain would she never have come forth. Moved by her trust, he drew his arm about her as if he would assure her of the refuge she sought; but scarcely did she perceive this than she raised her tear-stained face to him, her eyes met his, and all that can be expressed in a glance, when penitence meets love, when gratitude meets the giver's joy, when “yes” meets “yes,” now followed in rapid succession. He clasped her

hand, and pressed his lips to hers; he had early lost his mother; — he kissed for the first time in his life, and she did the same. Neither could bear to break away, and when their lips parted it was only to close again. He trembled, but she was radiant and all aglow with blushes; she flung her arms about his neck, and clung like a child to him. And when they sat down together, and she could touch his hands, his hair, his pin, his neck-tie, all that she had been in the habit of surveying from a respectful distance; and when he begged her to say “thou” instead of “you,” and she could not; and when he tried to tell her how rich she had made his poor life from the first moment, and how long he had struggled against his feelings, determined that they should not check her progress; and then discovered that she was unable to take in or comprehend a single word he was uttering, and began to think himself there was not much sense in it either, but she wanted to go home with him at once, and he laughingly must beg her to wait a few days and then they could journey far away together; then they felt, then they said, as they sat among the trees, with fjord and mountain before them bathed in the sunset glow, that this was happiness.

Ah, sweet is Love's first meeting!
Like song, the forest waking,
Or o'er the ocean breaking,
Like sunset's rosy greeting ; —
Like bugle-tones ascending
To heav'n, these moments thrilling,
With Nature's wonders blending,
Our hearts with music filling.

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CHAPTER V.

THE next morning Petra sat in her room half dressed, and could get no further the whole day. Each time she made a fresh effort, her arms fell powerless on her lap. Her thoughts were weighed down like a full-ripe ear of corn, like rich bluebells in the fields. Peace, security, fluctuating visions hovered over the bright castle wherein she dwelt. She lived over again the interview of yesterday, — every word, every look, every pressure of the hand, every kiss was present before her; she wished to pass it all in review from the meeting to the parting, but could never get through, for every single reminiscence became transformed into a shadowy dream, and each dream kept returning with bright promises. Sweet as this was, she was forced to thrust it from her in order to recall where she had left off; but no sooner did she recall it than she was again lost in the marvelous.

As she did not come down-stairs, her mother supposed that she had taken up her studies

again, now that Ödegaard had returned ; so her meals were sent up, and she was to be left in peace the whole day. Not until toward evening did she rise to make herself ready ; she was going to meet her love. She attired herself in the best she possessed — all her confirmation finery ; it was not elegant, but she felt this now for the first time. She, who had had so little taste for dress, to-day suddenly acquired it. One article made the others look ugly until those had been selected that suited together, and even then the effect was not tasteful. She would have given much to-day to be the fairest one — but with these words there glided before her a remembrance which she thrust away with her hand ; nothing, nothing must approach her that might cause her disquietude. She stepped about softly, quietly arranging one thing and another in her room, as the time had not yet come. She opened the window and looked out ; rosy, glowing clouds had pitched their tents above the mountains ; but a cooling breeze floated in with a message from the forest near by. “ Yes, now I am coming ! now I am coming ! ” her heart whispered as she once more turned to the mirror to bestow a greeting upon her bridal emotions.

Then she heard Ödegaard’s voice below with

ner mother, heard him directed how to find her room. He was coming to fetch her. A shy joy came over her ; she glanced around to see if all was in order to receive him, then she went to the door.

“Come in !” she answered softly to the low knock, and then stepped back a few paces.

That same morning, when Ödegaard rang for his coffee, he had been informed that the merchant, Yngve Vold, had already been twice at the door, asking for him. It jarred on him that a stranger had to be blended with his thoughts just now ; and yet one who sought him so early must have some very important errand. He was, indeed, hardly dressed when Yngve Vold came again.

“You are doubtless surprised ? Well, so am I. Good day !”

Greetings were exchanged, and the merchant laid aside his light hat.

“You sleep late ; I have been here twice before. I have something important on my mind, I *must* speak with you.”

“Pray, be seated !” And Ödegaard himself sat down in an easy chair.

“Thank you, thank you, I prefer to walk, I am excited. Since day before yesterday I have

been out of my wits — actually mad, neither more nor less. And you are to blame ! ”

“ I ? ”

“ Yes, you. It was you who first brought the girl forward ; no one had thought of her, no one noticed her but you. But now, upon my word, I assure you I have never seen anything so peerless myself — so — is it not true ? Indeed, in all Europe I have never seen so confounded a curly-headed wonder ; have you ? I could find no peace ; I was bewitched. Everywhere and always she kept coming in my way. I went on a voyage, I came back again, impossible — am I not right ? Did not know at first who she was. The fisher maiden, they said — the Spanish maiden, they should have said, the gypsy, the witch, all fire, eyes, bosom, hair — eh ? How she sparkles, glows, skips, laughs, blushes — a perfect little witch. I chased her, you see, up among the trees in the forest — one calm evening — there she stood, there I stood ; a few words, a song, a dance — and then ? Well, I gave her my chain ; as sure as I live I had not thought of it a minute before. Next time, the same place, the same chase ; she was frightened, and I — yes, can you believe it ? — I could not speak one mortal word, dared not even touch her ;

but when she came back — can you understand it? — I proposed to her. I had not thought of it a second beforehand! Now yesterday I put myself to the test; I tried how it would be to keep away from her, but on my soul and honor, I am mad, indeed, I am — I *cannot*, I must be with her. If she does not marry me I will simply shoot myself. See — now you have the whole story. The deuce a bit do I care for my mother, or for the town — it is a miserable town, a mere hole of a place, a hole of a place. She must go away, you see; she must be far beyond and above this town; she must become *comme il faut*; ¹ she must go abroad, to France to Paris. I will pay the expenses and you must make the arrangements. I might leave here myself, settle abroad, no longer stay in this hole; but, you see, there is the fish! I should like to make something of the town; it is asleep; no one thinks, no one speculates; yet there are the fish! There is no management of the fisheries, though; the Spaniards, everybody abroad, complain; new methods must be found, another way of curing introduced; there must be different management — an entire change. The town must have a start, trade flourish; the fisheries ought to be worth millions! — Where

¹ Meaning in thoroughly good style.

did I leave off? The fisheries, the fisher maiden; — for that matter, they belong together. The fisheries, the fisher maiden, ha, ha! Well, then, I furnish the cash; you make the arrangements; she will be my wife, and then ” —

Farther he did not get; during his speech he had paid no heed to Ödegaard, who had risen to his feet, pale as a corpse, and now attacked him with a delicate Spanish cane in his hand. The merchant's amazement was beyond description he warded off the first blow.

“Take care, you may hit me!” said he.

“Yes, I may hit you! You see: Spanish, Spanish cane; they belong together!” and the blows fell in showers on shoulders, arms, hands, face, wherever they chanced to hit. The merchant darted round the room.

“Are you mad! Have you lost your senses! I mean to marry her, — do you hear? — marry her!”

“Begone!” shrieked Ödegaard, whose strength was now exhausted.

And out of the door, and down the steps plunged the fair-haired man, away from this madman; and soon he stood in the street below, screaming up for his light hat. It was flung out of the window to him. Then all was still.

“Come in!” replied Petra to the low knock in the evening, and stepped back a few paces that she might have a better view of her lover as he entered. Like an ice-cold bath, as if the ground had slipped away beneath her feet, she beheld the face that met her in the door. She reeled backward and grasped the bed-post, but, hurled from abyss to abyss, her mind lost all support. Instantly she was rudely transformed from the happiest bride on earth to the most guilty sinner. This face, as though with the voice of thunder, proclaimed to her that through time and eternity she could never be forgiven.

“I see it; you are guilty!” he whispered, in scarcely audible tones.

He leaned back against the door, clinging to the latch, as if without it he could not stand. His voice quivered, tears rolled down his face, although otherwise it was unmoved.

“Do you realize what you have done?” and his eyes pressed her to the ground. She did not reply — not even with tears; she was paralyzed by utter, helpless despair. “Once before I gave my whole soul away, and he on whom I bestowed it died through my fault. It was impossible for me to rise above this sorrow unless some one else should lend me a helping hand and give to me her whole heart. This

you have done — but you did it through deception.” He paused, vainly strove several times to begin again, and finally, with a burst of agony, continued: “And all that I had been gathering together for years, thought after thought, you were capable of overthrowing, as though it were an image of clay! Child, child, could you not understand that I had worked my own way up through you? Now it is all over!” He made an effort to control his pain.

“No, you are too young to comprehend it,” he said, presently; “you do not know what you have done. But you must understand that you have *deceived* me. Tell me, what had I done to you that you were able to do anything so cruel? Child, child, would that you had told me this even yesterday! Why, ah, why, did you lie so frightfully?”

She heard his words; she knew that all he said was true. He had staggered across the room to a chair that stood near the window that he might lean his head on a table beside it. He rose again, sobbing with anguish, then took his seat once more, and was quiet.

“And I who am not fit to help my old father!” he whispered to himself, “I *cannot*, I have no call for the work. That is why no one can help me, — all, all that is mine must be dashed to pieces.”

He was powerless to continue. His head rested in his right hand, while his left hung relaxed at his side; he looked as if he were incapable of motion. Thus he sat there, and spoke not a word. Presently he felt something warm against the hand that hung at his side, and shuddered with terror, for it was Petra's breath. She was kneeling beside him with bowed head, and now she clasped her hands and looked up into his face with the most unutterable prayer for mercy. He returned her gaze, and the eyes of neither wavered. Then he raised his hand to repel her, as though her gaze had stirred within him a persuasive voice to which he would not hearken, and rapidly, vehemently, he stooped for his hat, that had fallen to the floor, and hastened to the door. But still more rapidly did she throw herself in his way, fling herself down before him, cling to his knee, and fasten her eyes on his — all without a sound. He both saw and felt this to be a struggle for life. His old love overpowered him; with deep pain in his eyes, he once more looked her full in the face, he took her head in his two hands. There was a wailing cry within his breast; it was like the last quivering vibrations of an organ when there is still wind in the pipes but the music has died away

Then he drew back his hands, and he did it in such a manner that his thoughts were but too evident.

“No — no! You can yield; but you cannot love!” He was overwhelmed. “Unhappy child, your future is beyond my control. God forgive you for having ruined mine!”

He strode past her; she did not stir; he opened the door and closed it again; she spoke not a word; she heard him on the stairs; she heard his last step on the flag-stones and down on the road — then she found relief in one piercing shriek, only one; but it brought her mother to her.

When Petra awoke to consciousness, she found herself lying in her bed, undressed, and carefully tended. In front of her sat her mother, her elbows on her knees, her head in her hands, and her eyes of flame fastened on her daughter.

“Have you studied enough with him?” asked she. “Have you learned something now? What is now to become of you?”

Petra replied with a burst of tears. Long, very long did her mother sit listening to this, and then with a solemnity peculiar to her, she said: —

“May the Lord curse him!”

The daughter started up.

“Mother, mother! Not him, not him, but me, me — not him!”

“Ah, I know the crowd! I know who is to blame!”

“No, mother! It is he who has been deceived and by me — it is I who have deceived him!”

Hurriedly, and amid sobs, she told all; he should not be suspected one moment; she told about Gunnar and what she had asked of him without actually understanding it; then about Yngve Vold’s unlucky gold chain, which had so deeply entangled her, and then about Ödegaard and how, when she saw him, she had forgotten all else. She could not understand how it had come to pass, but that it was a monstrous sin against them all, and especially against him who had taken her under his protection, and given her all that one mortal can give another, she well knew. After having long remained in silence, the mother replied: —

“And is there no sin against me? Where have *I* been during all this time that you have never said a word to me?”

“Oh, mother, help me; do not be hard on me now. I feel that I shall suffer for this as long as I live; and so I will pray God to let

me die soon! Dear, good Lord!" she forthwith began, clasping and uplifting her hands, "dear, good Lord, hear me! Already I have wasted my life; it has nothing more to offer me. I am not fit to live; I do not understand life. Dear Lord, let me then die!"

There was such an awful intensity in the prayer, that Gunlaug, who already had harsh words on her lips, swallowed them and laid her hand on her daughter's arm to draw it away from this prayer.

"Control your feelings, child. Do not tempt the Lord. You must live, however great the pain."

She rose with these words and never set foot in the loft chamber again.

Ödegaard had fallen into an illness which threatened to be dangerous. At once his old father moved up-stairs to him, took a room next to his for his study, and told every one who begged him to spare himself that this was impossible; his work was to watch over his son every time that son lost any one of those whom he loved more than his father.

Thus matters stood; and now Gunnar came home.

He almost frightened the life out of his mother by appearing long before the vessel he

had gone with ; she thought it was his ghost, and not very different was it with all his acquaintances. To all wondering queries he gave but scant replies. People, however, soon became better informed ; for that same day he was driven out of Gunlaug's house and by Gunlaug herself. On the steps she sent a shriek after him that rang through Holloway Street.

“Never come here again ; we have had enough of your sort now !”

He had not gone far when a girl came in pursuit of him with a parcel. She had another one with her, but gave him the wrong one, for Gunnar found in it a large gold chain. He stood weighing this and looking at it he had not understood Gunlaug's rage before ; still less did he now understand why she sent him a gold chain. He called the girl back ; and then she thought she must have made a mistake, so she gave him the other parcel, and asked if that was right. The parcel proved to contain his gifts to Petra. Yes, this was surely the one, but who, then, was to have the gold chain ? “That was meant for Merchant Vold,” answered the girl, and went off with it. Gunnar paused again, and reflected. “Merchant Vold ! Does *he* give her presents. Then it is *he* who has stolen her from me ! Very well, then *he*,

too, shall" — His excitement, his wrath, must have some vent ; something must be all beaten to pieces — and so he determined to beat Yngve Vold.

The unlucky merchant was once more quite unexpectedly attacked, and this time on his own door-steps. He fled from this second lunatic into his counting-house ; but Gunnar was after him. Here all the clerks rose up against this riotous intruder, who dealt kicks and blows in every direction ; chairs, tables, and desks were overturned ; letters, documents, and newspapers floated about like smoke ; help finally came from Yngve's pier, and after a desperate struggle Gunnar was cast out into the street. But here the fight began to be serious. Two ships lay by the pier, a foreign one and a home vessel, and it was now just at the time of noonday rest, so the sailors gladly entered into the sport. They lost no time in coming to blows, crew against crew, foreigners against natives ; the crews of several vessels were sent for, and came running up in double-quick pace ; working-people flocked round, and women and boys ; at last no one knew what the fight was about, or against whom. In vain the skippers swore ; in vain worthy citizens commanded that the one policeman of the town should be

summoned: he was at that time out fishing in the fjord. They ran to the mayor, who was also postmaster; but he had locked himself up with the mail that had just arrived, and answered through the window that he could not come; the post-office clerk was at a burial, and they must wait. But as they would not delay murdering one another until the mail had been sorted, several voices, chiefly those of terrified women, shouted that word should be sent for Arne, the blacksmith. This was agreed to by the worthy citizens, and now Arne's own wife was sent after him, "for the policeman was not at home." Arne came, to the delight of all school-boys, and he made a couple of dashes at the crowd, brought forth a gallant Spaniard, and used him as a club against all the others, promiscuously.

When all was over, the mayor came walking along, staff in hand. He found some old women and children talking together on the field of battle. These he sternly commanded to go home and eat their dinner, and then he himself did the same.

But the next day he instituted a trial; this lasted some time, although no one could give the least information concerning who had been fighting. Only on one point were they all

agreed, and that was that Arne the blacksmith had been in the fray, and they had seen him belaboring the rest with a Spaniard. For this conduct Arne the blacksmith was fined one dollar, for which his wife, who had led him into the scrape, received a thrashing on the eleventh Sunday after Trinity, which she had good cause to remember. This was the sole judicial result of the battle.

But it had other results. The little town was no longer a peaceful town; the fisher maiden had thrown it into an uproar. The strangest rumors were set afloat, — at first from jealous resentment that she should have attracted the most talented man of the town and its two wealthiest matches and still have “several” in reserve; for Gunnar had gradually become “several young men.” Soon there arose a universal moral storm. The disgrace of a great street fight and sorrow in three of the best families of the town rested on the young girl who but half a year since had been confirmed. Three engagements at once, and one of them with her teacher, her life benefactor! Ah! indignation overflowed. Had she not been a scandal to the town from her childhood up, and had not the people nevertheless shown her how much they expected of her by

their gifts at the time when Ædegaard had interested himself in her, and had she not now scorned them all, crushed him, and, true to her nature, plunged recklessly into a career that would lead her to become an outcast of society, with an old age in the house of correction? Her mother must be her accomplice; in her sailor's inn the child had learned levity. The yoke Gunlaug had laid on the town should no longer be borne; the people would no longer tolerate either mother or daughter among them; they would unite in driving them away.

One evening seafaring people who owed Gunlaug money, drunken laborers for whom she would not get work, young boys to whom she had refused credit, assembled on the hill, and were led by people of the better class. They whistled, they hallooed, they shouted for the "fisher maiden," for "fisher Gunlaug;" soon a stone was flung against the door and another through the loft window. They did not disperse until past midnight. Behind the windows all was dark and still.

The next day not a living soul would look in on Gunlaug; not even a child passed by on the hill. In the evening, however, there was the same disorderly mob, only that now every one without exception, joined in; they trampled

under foot, they smashed all the windows, they tore up the garden palings, they threw down young fruit-trees, and then they sang: —

“ ‘ I’ve hooked a seaman bold, mother! ’

‘ Ah, say’st thou so? ’

‘ I’ve hooked a merchant’s gold, mother! ’

‘ Ah, say’st thou so? ’

‘ Mother, I’ve hooked our parson’s son! ’

‘ ’T is idly done!

For cling and clang,

For bing and bang;

Beneath, he’ll slip thy nose’s tip!

Thou mayest get him in thy net,

But not on board thy ship! ’

“ ‘ He’s gone, the seaman bold, mother! ’

‘ What — say’st thou so? ’

‘ ’T is lost, the merchant’s gold, mother! ’

‘ What — say’st thou so? ’

‘ Mother, the parson’s son has fled! ’

‘ Ah, so I said!

For cling and clang,

For bing and bang;

I knew he’d slip thy nose’s tip!

Thou mightest get him in thy net,

But not on board thy ship! ’ ”

There was a general shouting for Gunlaug, for the mob especially rejoiced at the prospect of hearing the outburst of her peerless wrath.

Gunlaug, indeed, sat within and heard every word; but she kept silent. One must be able to endure much for the sake of one’s child.

CHAPTER VI.

PETRA had been in her room when the shouting, the whistling, the hallooing had begun the first evening. She had sprung to her feet as if the house about her were in flames, or everything tumbling to ruin over her head. she darted round her chamber like one lashed by red-hot scourges : they smarted, they burned into her soul ; her thoughts stormily sought a means of escape ; but down to her mother she dared not go, and the mob was swarming in front of her one window. Through this a stone came whizzing and fell on her bed ; she gave a shriek, and rushing into a corner hid herself behind a curtain, among her old clothes. There she cowered, burning with shame, trembling with terror ; visions of unknown horrors swept past her ; the air was full of faces, gaping, leering faces ; they came close to her, they were surrounded by fire. Aha ! here was no fire, these were eyes, it was raining eyes, large, glowing eyes, and small, twinkling eyes — eyes that stood still, eyes that rolled up and down.

“Lord, Lord, save me!”

Oh, what relief when the last shout died away in the night, and all was dark and still again. She ventured forth from her hiding-place, she flung herself on the bed and hid her face in the pillows; but from her thoughts there was no escape. In them her mother rose up before her, menacing, majestic, like storm-clouds gathering about the mountains; for what must not her mother have suffered for her sake! No slumber visited her eyelids, nor peace her soul; and day came, but no solace. She walked back and forth, back and forth, thinking only of how she could flee; but she dared not meet her mother, she dared not go out during the day-time, and the evening would bring them again! Still she must wait; it would be even more dangerous to take flight before midnight. And where, then? She had no money, she knew not where to go; but surely there must be merciful people somewhere as there was a merciful God. *He* knew that however she might have erred it was from no actual wickedness; He knew her penitence; He, too, knew her helplessness. She listened for her mother's steps below, but did not hear them; she trembled at thought of hearing her on the stairs, but she did not come. The serv

ant-girl who had worked there must have run away, for no one brought up the meals. She dared not go down herself, nor venture near the window, lest there might be some one outside watching for her. The chill air rushed in through the broken window-pane in the morning, and it was even worse when evening again set in. Petra had packed up a small bundle of clothes, and had dressed herself thoroughly that she might be all ready to start. But she must wait the pleasure of the frantic mob, and endure whatever might yet be in store for her.

There they were again ! The whistling, the shouting, the shower of stones — worse, far worse than on the previous evening. She crept into her corner, clasped her hands, and prayed and prayed. If only her mother would not go out to them ! If they would only not break in ! At length they began to sing — it was a lampoon ; and although every word cut like a knife, she could not help listening to it. But as soon as she understood that her mother's name was mixed up in it, and that they were guilty of so shameful an injustice, she rose and rushed forward ; she would speak out her mind to this pack of cowards, or cast herself down on them ! But a stone, and then another, and then a whole hail-storm of stones were pelted

through the window, pieces of glass rattled, stones whirled about the room, and she crept back to her corner. The sweat rolled from her as though she stood in the hottest sun ; but she no longer wept, she was no longer afraid.

Gradually the tumult subsided. Petra stole forth, and as soon as the last sound had died away she ventured to the window to look out ; but she trod on bits of broken glass and started back, then she stepped on stones and stood still that she might not be heard ; for now was the time to steal away. After having waited fully half an hour, she drew off her shoes and taking up her bundle, softly opened the door. Again she paused about five minutes, and then went quietly down the stairs. It caused her deep pain to go from the mother on whom she had brought all this sorrow, without taking leave of her ; but terror hunted her onward.

“Farewell, mother ! Farewell, mother !” she whispered to herself with every step she took on the stairs. “Farewell, mother !”

She reached the bottom, panted heavily several times for breath, then moved toward the front door. As she reached it a hand seized her from behind ; she uttered a faint cry and turned. There stood her mother. Gunlaug had heard her daughter’s door open, knew at

once what she was about to do, and stood waiting for her. Petra felt that she could not get past her without a struggle. Explanations would be of no avail; whatever words might come to her aid, nothing would be believed. Well — a struggle there must be then. Nothing in the world could be worse than the worst, and that she had been through.

“Where are you going?” the mother asked, softly.

“I must flee,” Petra answered as softly and with throbbing heart.

“And where can you go?”

“I do not know; but I must get away from here!”

She clasped her bundle more tightly and pressed on.

“No. Come along with me!” replied the mother, holding on to her arm. “I have provided for everything.”

At once Petra let go of herself, just as one relaxes one’s hold of a burden that has grown too heavy; she drew a long breath, as though after a struggle, and resigned herself to her mother. Gunlaug went before her into a small closet back of the kitchen, where there were no windows, and where burned a candle; it was here she had hidden herself when the tumult

raged without. The closet was so narrow that they could scarcely stir in it. The mother produced a bundle still smaller than the one Petra carried, opened it, and drew forth a suit of sailor's clothes.

"Put these on," she whispered.

Petra immediately understood why she must do so, and it touched her that her mother did not mention the reason. She undressed and put on the sailor's suit. Her mother helped her, and in so doing she once came near the candle, so that Petra saw for the first time that Gunlaug was old. Had she grown so during these last days, or had Petra never noticed it before? The daughter's tears rolled down on the mother, but the latter did not look up, and so Petra found no words. A south-wester was the last article handed her, and when she had put it on, her mother took her bundle from her, blew out the candle, and whispered, —

"Come, now !"

They went out again in the passage, but did not go through the front door ; Gunlaug opened the door to the yard and locked it again after they had passed out. They walked through the trampled-down garden, the fallen trees, the broken fence.

"You may as well look about you now," said

the mother, "it is scarcely likely you will ever come here again."

Petra shuddered and did not look about her. They took the upper road along the forest, where she had passed half her life, and that evening with Gunnar, those with Yngve Vold, and the last with Ödegaard. They walked on among the faded foliage that was beginning now to fall; the night air was cold, and Petra shivered in her unaccustomed attire. Her mother finally turned down toward a garden. Petra knew it at once, although she had never seen it from the upper side since that day when, as a child, she had stormed it. It was Pedro Ohlsen's garden. The mother had the key to it, and let them in.

It had cost Gunlaug much to come to this man in the forenoon; it cost her much now, too, to come with this ill-fated daughter to whom she could no longer give a home. But it had to be done; and whatever must be done, Gunlaug could do. She rapped at the back-porch door, and almost immediately she heard steps and saw a light. Presently the door was opened by Pedro, who stood inside in traveling boots and traveling dress, pale and frightened. He held a tallow candle in his hand, and sighed as his eyes fell on Petra's face, which was

swollen with weeping. The girl looked up at him ; but as he did not venture to recognize her, neither did she dare to give sign of recognition.

“ This man has promised to help you get away,” said the mother, without looking at either of them, as she walked up the few steps to the passage, and passed on to Pedro’s room on the other side of the house, leaving the others to follow her. The room was small and low, and a peculiar, close odor struck them as they entered, which nauseated Petra ; she had now in fact been more than twenty-four hours without either eating or sleeping. In the middle of the room, from the ceiling, hung a cage with a canary-bird in it ; it was necessary to walk round it to avoid running against it. The massive old chairs, a heavy table, a couple of large presses, such as are used by the peasants, that towered up to the ceiling, had an oppressive effect, making the room look even smaller than it was. On the table lay some sheets of music and on them a flute. Pedro Ohlsen shuffled about in his great boots, as if he had something to do. A feeble voice from the back room inquired : “ Who is that ? Who is in there ? ” whereupon he moved about faster than ever, mumbling : “ Oh, it is — hem, hem — it is — hem, hem ! ” and then he went into the room where the voice came from.

Gunlaug sat by the window with both elbows on her knees, her head bowed in her hands, and her eyes fixed on the sand that was strewn over the floor; she spoke not a word, but occasionally she heaved a piteous sigh. Petra stood by the door, with her legs crossed and her hands pressed against her bosom, for she felt sick. An old clock was chopping time to pieces, the tallow candle on the table had burned low, and needed snuffing badly. At length the mother, wishing to give a reason for their being here, said, —

“I once knew this man.”

Not another word did she speak; there came no reply. Pedro still remained absent, the candle ran down mournfully, and the clock kept chopping away. Petra became more and more overpowered by nausea, and through it she heard incessantly her mother's words: “I once knew this man.” The clock took them up and began to tick: “I — once — knew — this — man.”

In after years whenever Petra was met by a close smell, it always brought back to her that room, with a recollection of that faint, sick feeling and the clock's “I — once — knew — this — man.” She never came on board ship, to the odor of oil and the stench of foul sea-water

under the cabin floor, to the smell of cooking, but she at once felt sea-sick, and through her distress continually by night and by day, she saw this room and heard the clock's "I — once — knew — this — man."

When Pedro came in again, he had on a woolen cap and an old-fashioned stiff cloak, drawn up over his ears.

"Well, I am ready," said he, pulling on his mittens, just as if he were going out in the middle of winter. "But we must not forget" — he turned round — "the cloak for — for" — He looked at Petra and from her to Gunlaug, who took up a blue overcoat hanging over the back of a chair and now helped Petra put it on; but when it came under the girl's nose it smelled so strongly of the odor of the room that she begged for fresh air. Her mother saw that she felt ill, and, opening the door, led her quickly out into the garden. Here she drank in long draughts of the pure, fresh autumnal night air.

"Where am I to go?" she asked, as she began to revive.

"To Bergen," answered her mother, and assisted her to button the coat. "It is a large town, where no one knows you." When she had finished she stationed herself by the gate.

"You are to have one hundred dollars with you," said she, "so that if you do not get on well you may have something in reserve. This man loans them to you" —

"Gives, gives," whispered Pedro, brushing past them into the street.

"Loans them to you," repeated the mother, just as though he had not spoken; "I shall pay him back again." She took a kerchief from her own neck, tied it about her daughter's, and said, —

"You must write as soon as you are doing well, but not before."

"Mother!"

"And then he will row you to the vessel that is lying out in the harbor."

"O my God! Mother!"

"Well, I think there is nothing more. I can go no farther."

"Mother, mother!"

"The Lord be with you now! Farewell!"

"Mother, forgive me, mother!"

"And do not take cold on the sea."

She had drawn her daughter gently out of the garden gate and now closed it.

Petra stood motionless outside, her eyes fixed on the closed gate. She felt as wretched and lonely as it is possible for a mortal to be. But

at this moment there darted up a presentiment, a faith, out of exile, injustice, and tears : it was like a flickering fire, now kindled, now dying away, at one moment flaming up into the air, and then quite sinking away, but suddenly flashing into a glorious burst of splendor. She raised her eyes, and once more profound darkness surrounded her.

Through the deserted street of the little town, past the shut-in, leafless gardens, past the closed houses, where no light was burning, silently and slowly, she walked after him, whose slouching form, in big boots and cloak that made it seem headless, dragged wearily along. They came out into the avenue, where once more they trod on withered leaves and saw the spectre-like, upward-stretched boughs, with extended fingers clutching at them. They crept down the hill-side behind the yellow shed where the boat was kept ; he at once began bailing out the water, then rowed her out from the shore, which soon shrank into a black mass, over which darkly lowered the sky. Fields, houses, forest, mountain, all were wiped out ; nothing could she now distinguish of all that had been familiar to her from childhood up until yesterday : it had shut itself in from her as had the town, the people, that night when she was made an

outcast from them, and there was none to bid her farewell.

On the deck of the ship that was anchored close to shore, waiting the morning breeze, a man was pacing up and down. As soon as he perceived them beneath the quarter, he lowered a ladder, helped them on board, and gave notice to the captain, who promptly appeared on deck. She knew them, and they knew her; but there were no questions, no signs of sympathy. Simply as a matter of course she was told where her berth was, and what she was to do if she needed anything, or should be sick. The latter she was indeed the moment she went down in the cabin, and so as soon as she had changed her clothes she went on deck again. A familiar odor greeted her — ah! it was chocolate, and she was seized with an overpowering hunger, which tore and raged through her, and then the same man who had received them came forth from the cook-room bearing a whole bowl full of chocolate and some cakes. They came from her mother, he said. While she was eating he furthermore informed her that her mother had sent a chest on board, containing her best clothes, with her linen and woolen garments, besides food and other good things. At this moment there rose within her a vivid

remembrance of her mother, a sublime picture, such as she had never had before, but which she would retain through her whole future life. And in the presence of this image, sorrowfully and prayerfully, she made a solemn vow that she would one day give her mother some joy as a compensation for the sorrow she had now brought on her.

Pedro Ohlsen sat beside her when she sat down, and walked beside her when she walked, always endeavoring to keep out of her way, and in so doing getting continually in her way on the deck that was crowded with bales of goods. She saw nothing of his face except his large nose and his eyes, and these not very distinctly ; but he gave her the impression of being weighed down with something he wanted to say, but dared not. He sighed, he sat down, he got up, he walked round her, sat down again, but not a word could he command ; nor did she speak. Finally he was compelled to give it up, and dejectedly producing a huge leather pocket-book he whispered that in it she would find the one hundred dollars — and a little more. She held out her hand and thanked him, coming so close to his face in so doing that she saw his eyes, fixed on hers, glistening with tears. With her the last remaining spark of life was passing

away from his languishing existence. Gladly would he have told her something which might perchance call up some loving thought when he was no more ; but he was forbidden to do so, and although he would have spoken notwithstanding this, he could not muster the courage, nor did she give him any assistance. Petra was indeed too weary, and the thought that it was *he* who had caused her to commit that first sin against her mother would not just now leave her. His presence wore on her, and this grew worse instead of better the longer he sat there ; for when we are tired we are apt to be irritable. The poor man felt this ; he said he supposed he must go, and then finally he brought himself to whisper, "Farewell !" drawing one of his withered hands out of the mitten as he did so. She placed in it her warm hand ; they both rose.

"Thank you — and bear greetings from me !" said she.

He heaved a sigh, or rather made a gurgling sound, which was repeated several times, dropped her hand, turned, and quietly backed down the ship's ladder. She walked to the gunwale ; he looked up as she reached it, greeted her, took his place in the boat and rowed away. She stood watching him until he

became lost in the dark. When she went down to the cabin again she was so weary she could scarcely stand, and although she felt sick the moment she got down there, she had no sooner laid her head on the pillow and said the first two or three petitions of the Lord's Prayer than she fell asleep.

Meanwhile the mother was sitting up by the yellow boat-house; she had followed them slowly the whole distance, and had sat down there just as they had pushed from the shore. From the same spot Pedro Ohlsen, in days of yore, had gone out in the boat with her; it was a long, long time ago, but she remembered it well as he rowed away with her daughter.

As soon as she saw him coming back alone she rose and moved away; for now she knew that her daughter was safely on board the ship. She did not take the way home, but went farther onward; in the dark she found the path leading over the mountains, and this she took. Her house in town stood empty and shattered for more than a month; she felt that she could not return to it before she had received a cheering letter from her daughter.

But in the mean time there was an opportunity of testing the popular feeling toward her.

All low natures take passionate delight in uniting to persecute the stronger, but only as long as these offer resistance; when they see their victims calmly submitting to ill-treatment a sense of shame overcomes them, and they hiss at whoever would cast another stone. People had rejoiced at the thought of hearing Gunlaug's powerful voice raging through Holloway Street; they had fancied her calling the sailors to her aid and challenging a street fight. When she still failed to appear on the third evening, the people were scarcely to be controlled; they wanted to go in after her; they wanted to cast the two women out in the street; pursue them out of the town; drive them away. The windows had not been repaired since the preceding night; accompanied by the hurrahs of the mob two men crept through them in order to open the door — and in stormed the riotous multitude! They searched through every room, upstairs and down; they burst the doors; they dashed to pieces everything that stood in their way; they hunted in every corner, even in the cellar at last, after mother and daughter; but not a living soul was to be found. For a moment all was still; those who were inside came out, one by one, and stole away behind the rest. In a very little while the yard in front of the house was deserted.

Soon there were those in the town who pronounced this conduct toward two defenseless women most unseemly.

The matter was talked over until all agreed that whatever the fisher maiden might have been guilty of, Gunlaug was not to blame for it, and therefore great injustice had been done her. She was sadly missed in the town; drunken brawls and riots began to be the order of the day; for the town had actually lost its police. Her commanding form in the doorway was missed by passers-by; the seamen in especial missed her. No house was like hers, they said, for there every one was dealt with according to his deserts; each had his proper place in her confidence, and her help, whatever might happen. Neither sailors nor skippers, neither employers nor housewives had realized her worth until now that she was gone.

And so a message of joy spread through the whole town when it became known that she had been seen in her house baking and cooking as before. Every one was compelled to go there for himself in order to be assured that the panes had been replaced, the door repaired, and that smoke was curling up from the chimney. Yes, the report was really true. Gunlaug had actually returned!

People crept up on the opposite side of Holloway Street that they might see better. There she sat in front of the bread griddle; she neither looked up nor out, her eye followed her hand and her hand was working; for she had come back to redeem her losses and first of all to pay from her earnings the one hundred dollars she owed Pedro Ohlsen. In the beginning people contented themselves with merely looking in on her; but for a long time evil consciences deterred them all from entering. Gradually, however, they came, — first the mothers of households, good, friendly souls; but they found no opportunity to talk with her of anything but business, for Gunlaug would listen to nothing else. Next came the fishermen, then the merchants and the skippers to hire people to work for them and to make inquiries in regard to the character of those seeking employment, and finally, on the first Sunday after her return, the sailors appeared. There must have been some agreement among them, because, as the evening wore on, the house became suddenly so crowded that not only were both the principal rooms overflowing, but the chairs and tables, which in the summer time stood in the garden, had to be brought out and set up in the passage, in the kitchen, and in the back cham

ber. No one, in casting an eye over this assemblage, could form the least idea of the feelings of these people who were sitting together ; for Gunlaug had resumed her silent sway the moment they had crossed her threshold, and the stern dignity with which she waited on each checked every effort at welcome, every question. She was the same as of old, except that her hair was no longer black and that her manner had become somewhat subdued. But when the sailors began to grow merry, they could no longer restrain themselves, and every time she and the servant girl went out Knud, the boatswain, who had always been her favorite, was called on to drink her health when she came in again. But courage failed even him until his head was pretty well heated, and when finally she came to collect the empty flasks and glasses, he rose and said, "that it was a good thing she was back again. For it was most certainly true that — that it was a good thing she was back again."

This seemed to the others well spoken ; they, too, rose to their feet, and shouted, "Yes, it was a good thing!" and those in the passage and those in the kitchen and those in the next room sprang up also, and pressing forward echoed what had been said, while the boat-

swain, handing her a glass, cried, "Hurrah!" and then several cried, "Hurrah!" until it seemed as if the roof might be lifted and sent sailing upward to the skies.

By and by some one declared that shameful injustice had been done her; then another swore the same, and soon the whole house swore and protested that they had done her the most shameful injustice. When finally there came a lull, because a word from her was eagerly desired, Gunlaug said that they must all accept many thanks.

"But," added she, continuing to gather up the empty glasses and flasks, "as long as *I* have said nothing about the matter, it is unnecessary for you to bring it up."

She here left the room, as she had collected all she could carry, and presently returned for the rest. From this time forth her power was supreme.

CHAPTER VII.

IN the darkness of night the vessel cast anchor in the harbor of Bergen. Half bewildered from sea-sickness, Petra was taken in the captain's boat through a multiplicity of vessels, large and small, up to the throng of ferrymen on the wharves and of peasants and street-boys in the narrow by-ways through which their way led. They halted in front of a neat little cottage, where an old woman, at the captain's request, cordially received her. She craved food and sleep, and had both wants satisfied. She awoke at noon the next day, refreshed and bright, to new sounds and an unfamiliar accent, and when the curtains were up, to a new surrounding nature, to strange faces and a strange town. She herself had become a new person, she thought, as she paused before the glass — this face was not the old familiar one. She could not well define the difference, not understanding that at her age any great sorrow and shock refines and spiritualizes; yet at sight of herself in the glass she was forced to recall the

past nights, and as she did she shuddered. So she hastened to get ready to go down-stairs to all the new surroundings that awaited her. She met her hostess and several ladies who first surveyed her from head to foot and then promised to interest themselves in her behalf ; as a beginning they offered to show her round the city. She desired to make a number of purchases, and so she ran up-stairs again after her pocket-book ; but it seemed so thick and clumsy that, feeling ashamed to carry it down-stairs with her, she opened it in her room to take out the money. Instead of one hundred dollars, she found three hundred. Thus Pedro Ohlsen had again given her money contrary to her mother's knowledge and consent. So little comprehension had she of its value, though, that the amount of the sum did not astonish her ; and so it did not occur to her to reflect on the cause of his great liberality. Instead of a communication overflowing with joy and inquiries indicating a suspicion of the truth, Pedro Ohlsen received from Gunlaug a letter written to her self, in which her daughter with ill-concealed vexation betrayed her benefactor and asked what she was to do with this smuggled gift.

What first strongly impressed Petra was the natural scenery of the town. She could not

get clear of the feeling that the mountain was so near her that she must beware of it. A sense of oppression came over her whenever she raised her eyes, and at the same time she felt an impulse to stretch forth her hand and knock to gain admission. There were moments, on the contrary, when it seemed to her that she could find no possible outlet. Sun-forsaken and gloomy stood the mountain; dense clouds hung above it or were driven over it; there was an incessant alternation of wind and rain coming from the mountain and sent by the mountain upon the town. There was no gloom, however, over the people around her. Soon she felt happy among them, for in their bustling activity there was a freedom, an ease, a cheerfulness, she had never known, and which, after what she had experienced, affected her like a smile of welcome. When at dinner the next day she remarked that she liked best to be where there were many people, she was told that if that were the case she should go to the theatre, where, in a single building, she would find hundreds of people. She thought she would like that, so a ticket was bought, and at the appointed hour she was taken to the theatre, which was close by, and was shown to a seat in the front row in the balcony. She sat

in a dazzling blaze of light, among many hundred bright-faced people, and surrounded by gay colors and a buzz of voices that smote on her ear from every direction, rushing toward her like the roaring of the mighty ocean.

Petra had not the faintest conception of what she was to see here. She knew, indeed, nothing but what Ödegaard had taught her, and what she had learned from chance acquaintances. About the theatre, however, Ödegaard had never told her a word; the sailors had spoken of a theatre where there were wild beasts and equestrian performers, and it would never have occurred to the boys to speak of a play even if they had learned about it at school; the little town had no theatre, not even a house called by that name; traveling beast-tamers, rope-dancers, and clowns were in the habit of exhibiting either in some seaman's warehouse or in the open commons. She was so ignorant that she did not even know what to ask; she sat there in high spirits waiting for the appearance of curiosities, such as camels or monkeys. Filled with this idea she came gradually to see animals in every face about her, — horses, dogs, foxes, cats, mice, — and it amused her. Thus the orchestra assembled without her noticing it. She started up in alarm, for

with abrupt bewildering crash of kettle-drums, drums, bassoons, and horns, the overture began. In her whole life she had never heard more than a couple of violins, and perchance a flute, played at one time. The stormy grandeur of tone that now smote on her ear made her turn pale, so like it was to the cold, black billow that breaks on the sea. She sat lost in terror lest the next burst should be even more exciting; and yet she would have been loath to have the music cease. Soon gentler harmonies brought light, revealing vistas never dreamed of before, and toward these she was softly rocked by sweet melodies. Sportive life filled the air about her; a radiant throng was soaring upward with vigorous pinion strokes, and now it softly descended, majestically congregated together only to break apart in frolicsome gaiety, until the pall of darkness descended, and all seemed to be whirled away in the boom of a great cataract. Then, above the din and roar rose a single strain, as from a bird on a bough wet by the spray from the depths below. Sadly, timidly, the song began, but the atmosphere above was purified thereby, the sun peeped forth, and once more the long blue vistas were filled with those marvelous fluttering, floating visions she had seen before. This had

lasted but a brief period when, lo! it subsided into gentle peace, the exultant hosts passed farther and farther away, naught was visible save the sunbeams which were diffused through the air; above this infinite waste the sun alone held sway, calmly weaving its meshes of light over the scene, and amidst all this glory Petra sat dreaming. She involuntarily rose when the music ceased; for now the spell was broken. Ah, how wonderful! At that moment the beautiful painted curtain, right in front of her, went all the way up to the ceiling! She was in a church, a church with arches and pillars, a church filled with the swelling tones of an organ, and solemn grandeur, and people advanced toward her in costumes unknown to her, and they spoke, yes, they were talking in church, and in a language she did not understand. But how was this? They were talking behind her, too.

“Sit down!” said they; but there were no seats in the church, so of course the two people she saw there remained standing as well as she, and the longer she looked at them the clearer it became to her that these costumes were the same she had seen in a picture of Olaf the Saint—and there, they were actually mentioning St. Olaf’s name.

“Sit down!” she again heard behind her; “sit down!” exclaimed several voices.

“There is, perhaps, something to be seen back there, too,” thought Petra, and turned quickly.

A multitude of angry faces, some actually threatening, met hers.

“There must be something amiss here,” thought Petra, and she was about to leave, but an old lady who sat beside her gently pulled her dress.

“Why do you not sit down, then, child?” whispered she. “The people behind us cannot see.”

In an instant Petra was in her seat. “Why, of course, it is the theatre in there, and we are looking on — yes, to be sure, it is the theatre!” and she kept repeating the word to impress it fully on her mind.

Once more she gazed into the church, but in spite of every effort she failed to understand him who was speaking there. Not until she had fully comprehended that he was a handsome young man did she here and there gather the import of his words, and when she found that he was speaking of love and was himself in love, she understood almost everything he said. Her attention was suddenly drawn from

him by the entrance of a third, whom she knew, from pictures she had seen, must be a monk, and she had longed very much to see a monk. How softly he stepped about, and how quiet he was! He seemed, indeed, to be a pious man, and he spoke so distinctly and slowly that Petra could follow every word. But suddenly he turns and says just the opposite of what he has been saying. Good heavens! this is a villain! Listen, he is a villain! Even his face shows plainly that he is one! Why cannot that handsome young man discover it? He surely must have heard what he said!

“He is deceiving you!” she whispered, half aloud.

“Hush!” said the old lady.

Ah! the young man did not hear; in his perilous trust he leaves the church. They all withdraw, and presently an old man enters. Why, how is this? When the old man speaks, it seems as if the young man was speaking, and yet this surely is an old man. But look! look! A shining procession of white-clad maidens, walking two and two, are passing noiselessly and slowly through the church. Petra saw them long after they had gone, and before her mind's eye floated a similar memory

from her childhood. She had gone with her mother across the mountains one winter: as they waded along through the new-fallen snow, they inadvertently startled a brood of ptarmigans, who suddenly filled the air before them; they were white; white was the snow; the forest was white — for a long time afterward all her visions were white. So, too, it was now for a while.

But now one of these white-robed women advances, rosary in hand, and kneels; the old man, too, has knelt down, and she speaks to him. He bears her a message and a letter from foreign lands. He hands her the letter, and it is quite evident that it is from some one very dear to her. Ah, how delightful this is! They all love one another here! She opens it; why, it is no letter — it is full of music! But see, ah, see! he is himself the letter. The old man is the young one, and it is he whom she loves. They embrace. Good heavens! they kiss! Petra felt herself growing fiery red, and buried her face in her hands, while she listened further. Hark! he is telling her that they must marry immediately, and she pulls his beard, laughing, and saying he has become a barbarian, and he tells her how beautiful she has become. He gives her a ring, and he prom-

ises her robes of scarlet and velvet, golden shoes, and a girdle of gold; then merrily taking leave, he goes to the king to speak of the wedding. His bride gazes after him, with beaming face; but when she turns, the place seems empty without him.

Then swiftly the wall glides down again. Can it be over now? Why, it seemed to be only just beginning! Blushing deeply, Petra turned to the old lady and inquired, —

“Is it over?”

“No, no, child; this is only the first act. There are five such, yes, there are, indeed,” she repeated, with a sigh; “there are five of them.”

“About the same?” asked Petra.

“What you mean by that?”

“Do the same people come back again, and does it all go on?”

“Have you never seen a play before?”

“No.”

“Ah, to be sure, I suppose there are many places where there is no theatre; it is so expensive.”

“But what is it all?” asked Petra, staring with anxious eagerness, as if she could not wait for an answer. “Who are these people?”

“This is a company belonging to Manager Naso, a first-class company; he is so clever.”

“Is it he who makes it all up? Or, what is it? For pity’s sake, answer me!”

“Dear child, do you not know what a play is? Where do you come from?”

But when Petra thought of her birthplace, she recalled also her shame and her flight, and she relapsed into silence, not daring to ask any more questions.

The second act came, and with it the king. Yes, truly this was the king; her eyes really beheld a monarch! She heard not what he said, she saw not with whom he spoke; she only looked at his kingly attire, his kingly demeanor, his kingly gestures. She was first roused from her absorption when the young man entered; and then they all started off after the bride. Now she was forced to wait again.

During the interlude the old lady leaned over to her. “Do you not think the acting very fine?” said she.

“Acting — what do you mean by that?” and Petra looked at her in surprise.

She did not notice that every one round about was staring at her, and that the old lady was urged on by the others to question her; she did not hear that they were all laughing at her.

“They do not speak as we do!” said she, receiving no answer.

“Why, they are Danes,” replied the old lady, also beginning to laugh.

Then it dawned on Petra that the good lady was laughing at her many queries; and she said no more, but sat with her eyes fixed intently on the curtain.

When it rose again, she had the great delight of seeing an archbishop. It was as before; she became so lost in the sight of him that she heard not a word that he uttered. Then the sound of music reached her, — ah, so hushed, so far distant! but it came nearer and nearer; it was a chorus of women’s voices, accompanied by flutes and violins and an instrument that was not a guitar, and yet like many guitars, only softer, richer, more vibrating in tone. The harmony of the whole streamed toward her in long waves of sound, and when it all had become transformed into undulating colors, the procession swept in; soldiers with halberds, choristers with censers, monks bearing tapers, a crowned king, and at his side the bridegroom, clad in white. Then came once more the white-robed women, strewing roses and music before the bride, who was attired in white silk and wore a red wreath in her hair

At her side walked a tall, stately woman, in a purple robe with a long train, dotted with crowns of gold, and with a small glittering crown on her head. This must be the queen! The whole church was flooded with music and rich coloring, and everything which now took place from the moment the bridegroom led the bride to the altar where they knelt, while their followers knelt about them, until the archbishop came up with his train of crusaders, was but as new links in the many-hued chain of tones.

But now, just as the ceremony was about to begin, the archbishop held aloft his crosier and forbade it: their marriage was contrary to the laws of God; never in this life could they be united! O Heavenly Father, have mercy! The bride swooned away, and Petra, too, who had risen to her feet, fell with a piercing shriek.

"Water! Bring water here!" voices about her cried.

"No," said the old lady, in reply. "She has not fainted; it is not necessary."

"It is not necessary," was echoed around "Silence."

"Silence!" was shouted from the parquet. "Silence in the balcony!"

"Hush!" was answered from the balcony.

“You must not take it so to heart; it is all romance and nonsense,” whispered the old lady; “but Madam Naso plays astonishingly well.”

“Be still!” now Petra, too, called out; she was already absorbed in the play, for now the fiendish monk appeared with a sword. The two lovers were made to take a piece of cloth and he cut it asunder between them with his sword, as the church severs, as pain severs, and as the sword above the gates of Paradise severed from bliss on that day when Adam and Eve were driven from the garden of Eden. Weeping women took from the bride her red wreath, and gave her in its place a white one; with it she was pledged to the cloister for life. He, to whom she belonged beyond time and eternity, should know that she lived, but might not claim her; know her to be buried within those convent walls, yet never see her. How heart-rending the farewell they bade each other! There could be no greater grief on earth than theirs!

“Good gracious!” whispered the old lady, as the curtain fell; “do not be so foolish, I beg of you. It is only Madam Naso, the manager’s wife.”

Petra opened wide her eyes and stared at

the good lady. She thought she must be mad, and as the lady had long held the same opinion of Petra, they kept on glancing shyly at each other from time to time, but interchanged no further remarks.

When the curtain rose once more, Petra could no longer follow what was taking place on the stage; she had eyes for nothing save the bride behind the cloister walls and the bridegroom watching by day and by night without, both in dire despair. She endured their agony; she prayed their prayers; all that was actually on the stage passed colorless before her. An ominous silence recalled her; the empty church kept growing ever larger, no sound was heard within save the twelve strokes of the midnight hour. Beneath the vaulted roof is heard a rumbling peal, the walls tremble, St. Olaf has arisen from his tomb, his winding-sheet about him. Tall and terrible, he strides onward; guards flee before him; thunder rolls; and the monk falls, pierced by the mighty spear, whereupon darkness closes around, and the apparition sinks away. The monk is left lying there like a heap of ashes struck by lightning.

Petra had unconsciously clung to the old lady, who had been rather alarmed by her con-

vulsive grasp, but now seeing her growing paler hastened to say, —

“Bless you, child! this is merely Knutsen. This is the only part he can act because his voice is so thick.”

“No, no, no, no! I saw the flames about him,” said Petra, “and the church trembled beneath his tread!”

“Do be quiet there!” is cried from several quarters. “Out with whoever it is that cannot keep quiet!”

“Silence in the balcony!” comes from the parquet.

“Be still!” answers the balcony.

Petra had covered down as if to shield herself from observation, but immediately forgot what had been going on, for lo! there are the lovers again; the lightning has burst open a way for them; they are seeking escape. They have found each other, — they fall into each other’s arms. God in heaven, protect them now!

Then there arises a clamor of shouts, mingled with the sound of trumpets. The bridegroom is torn from his bride’s side and is made to join the hosts battling for the fatherland. He is wounded, and with his dying breath sends his last greetings to his bride. Petra

does not comprehend what has happened until the bride quietly enters and sees his corpse ! Then it seems as if every cloud of sorrow had gathered over this one spot ; but a glance disperses them. From the bosom of the dead the bride looks up and prays that she, too, may die. The heavens are opened to that gaze ; a wondrous light streams down ; the bridal chamber is above ; let the bride enter. Ah ! she can already look in, for in her eyes there sparkles a peace like that on yonder lofty mountains. Then the eyelids droop, the struggle has ended in victory, the fidelity of the lovers has won an exalted crown. She has joined her lover now.

Petra long sat silent ; her heart was uplifted in faith, her whole being filled with the strength and greatness she had witnessed. She rose superior to all that was groveling ; she rose above fear and pain ; she rose with a smile for every one, and in them all she saw her brothers and sisters. The evil which divides man existed no longer—it lay crushed beneath the thunder. People returned her smile ; she was the person who had been half beside herself during the play ; but she saw in their smiles only the reflection of the victory she bore within herself. In the belief that their smiles were in harmony with her own, she smiled

back so radiantly that they smiled in response to her smile. She passed down the broad stairway, between the two receding columns, from which was reflected joy in response to her joy, and beauty in response to the beauty which radiated from her. There are times when the beams of light in our own souls become so brilliant that they make everything about us bright though we ourselves be unconscious of it. This is earth's grandest triumphal procession — to be announced, borne onward, and followed by one's own glowing thoughts.

When Petra, not knowing how she came there, reached home, she inquired what it was she had seen. There were several persons present who were able to understand her and give her a helpful answer. And after it had been fully explained to her what a drama was, and what great actors had in their power to do, she started up and said, —

“This is the noblest calling on earth; this is what I mean to be.”

To the astonishment of every one she put on her things and went out again. She felt that she must be alone in the open air. She walked out of town, and, though the wind blew high, passed on to a point near by that jutted out into the sea. The turbulent waves were dashing

against the rocks below ; but on both sides of the bay the town lay overspread with a luminous haze, through which countless numbers of scattered beams of light were working their way, and could but shed radiance over the veil they could not raise. She made this an emblem of her soul. The hollow sound in the mighty darkness beneath her feet was a warning from unfathomable depths. Either she must sink into the dread abyss, or she must enter the ranks of those who are striving to give light. She asked herself why she had never had such thoughts before, and replied that it was because she had been ruled by the power of the moment, but then she also felt that at such times she had power indeed. She saw it now : just as many moments would be granted her as there were twinkling lights yonder, and she prayed God to be able to make them all full that He might not have kindled them in vain. An icy wind blew about her, and she rose. She had not been gone long, but when she bent her steps homeward once more she knew whither her path must henceforth lead.

The next day she stood before the manager's door. Loud, angry voices reached her from within ; one of them, she thought, was like that

of the bride of yesterday. It was pitched in a different key, it was true, but it made Petra quiver. She waited for some time, but as it seemed as though there would be no end to the bickering, she knocked.

“Come in!” cried a man’s voice, in a very angry tone.

“Oh!” screamed a female voice, and as Petra opened the door, she saw a picture of flying terror, with streaming hair and night-dress, vanish through a side door.

The manager, a tall man, with savage eyes which he hastened to cover with a pair of gold spectacles, was pacing the floor in a state of wild tumult. His long nose so completely dominated his face that all the other features seemed to be there for its sake alone. His eyes peered out like a brace of gun barrels behind this bulwark; the mouth was a ditch in front of it, and the forehead a light bridge thrown across from it to the forest or the “barricades.”

“What do you want?” he snarled, suddenly coming to a halt in front of Petra. “Are you the person who wants to become a chorus-singer?”

“Chorus-singer? What is that?”

“Well, then you do not know, *aha!* What do you want, then?”

“I want to be an actress.”

“So that is what you want — indeed, and you do not so much as know what a chorus-singer is. But do you not speak a dialect?”

“Dialect? What is that?”

“Well, upon my word! You do not know what that is either, and yet you want to be an actress. Ah, indeed! — yes, that is just like those Norwegians. Dialect means that you do not talk as we do.”

“Yes, but I have been practicing the whole morning.”

“Have you, indeed? Well — well! Let me hear!”

And Petra struck an attitude and said, with the same accent as the bride of yesterday, —

“I greet you, my love, good morning!”

“I think! — the deuce take you! — that you must have come here to ridicule my wife!”

A peal of laughter was heard from the adjoining room, and the manager, without in the least appearing to remember the mortal quarrel of a moment since, opened the door and called in : —

“Here is a Norwegian hussy who wants to caricature you. Do come out and see.”

A lady, with disheveled, obstinate black hair, dark eyes, and large mouth, actually thrust her

head into the room and laughed. But Petra hastened toward her, for this must be the bride — no, her mother, she thought, as she came nearer. With her eyes fixed on the lady, she said, —

“I am not sure whether it is you — or is it your mother?”

Now the manager laughed; the lady had drawn back her head, and she continued to laugh in the side room. Petra’s embarrassment was so vividly depicted in her face, her attitude, the play of her features, that the manager became attentive. After watching her for a while, he picked up a book, and, as if nothing in the world had occurred, said, —

“Take this and read, my girl; but read as you yourself speak.”

She did so at once.

“No, no, that is not right. Listen to me!” He read to her, and she repeated what he had read, imitating to perfection.

“No, no, that is wrong; read Norwegian — the deuce! Norwegian.”

And Petra again read as before.

“No, I tell you, that is entirely wrong. Do not you understand what I mean? Are you stupid?”

He tried again and again, and gave her another book.

"See, this is in the opposite style; it is comic. Read this."

Petra read, but the same confusion followed until he grew disgusted, and shouted, --

"No, no, no! Why the devil do you not stop? What do you want on the stage? What the deuce is it you want to play?"

"I want to play what I saw yesterday."

"Aha! Of course you do! Well, -- and then?"

"Why," said she, growing rather embarrassed, "it seemed to me splendid yesterday, but to-day I have been thinking it over, and I feel sure it would be better still if it had a good ending. That is the way I would like to play it."

"Would you, indeed? Ah, well! There is really nothing to prevent. The author is dead, he can make no further corrections, and you who can neither speak nor read want to remodel his play for him. Well, that is truly Norwegian!"

Petra did not comprehend a word; she only understood that it was against her, and she began to feel uneasy.

"May I not?" asked she, softly

"Why, good gracious. there is nothing to prevent. Pray begin! Listen," said he, in

an entirely different tone, and walking straight up to her: "You have no more idea of acting than a cat. And you have no talent either for comedy or tragedy; I have now tried you in both. Because you have a pretty face and a pretty figure, people have persuaded you that you can play better than my wife, to be sure, and so you want to come out in the finest *rôle* in our repertoire and alter it in the bargain. Well, that is the way with the Norwegians! they are people who are ready for everything!"

Petra's breath grew shorter and more labored, and there was evidently a struggle going on within. At length she ventured to whisper, —

"Do you really say that I may not?"

He had been standing looking out of the window, feeling quite sure that she had gone. Much astonished, he now turns, but observing her strongly-depicted emotion, and the vigor indicated by her whole demeanor, he pauses a moment, suddenly seizes a book, and, handing it to her, says, in a voice and with an expression of countenance from which every trace of his former manner had been effaced, —

"Here, read this piece, and read it slowly just that I may hear your voice. Well, — go on!"

But she could not read; she could not so much as see the letters.

“Come, do not be embarrassed!”

She began at last, but her reading was cold, colorless. He begged her to read the passage again, and “with more feeling.” That made it still worse. At this he took the book from her, saying calmly, —

“I have now tried you in every possible way, so I cannot be blamed. I do assure you, my dear young lady, if I should send my boot on the stage or send you, it would make precisely the same impression, and a most singular one it would be. And now this is enough!”

But as a final effort Petra ventured to say, in tones of entreaty, —

“I really think I would understand if I might only” —

“Yes, no doubt, — every fishing hamlet understands the matter far better than we. The Norwegian public is the most enlightened in the world. Come, now, if you will not go, I will!”

She turned to the door, and burst into tears.

“See here!” said he — for this violent emotion had kindled a light within him. “Is it possible that it was you who made so much excitement in the theatre yesterday?”

She grew fiery red, and stood looking helplessly at him.

“Yes, of course it was you. I know you now — ‘the fisher maiden.’ After the play I was in company with a gentleman from your native place; he ‘knew you well.’ And so this is why you want to go on the stage: you want to practice your arts there. That is it! Hark, my theatre is a respectable place, and I decline every attempt to make it otherwise. Go! Will you go, I say?”

And Petra passed out the door, went sobbing down the stairs, and out of the house. She ran weeping through the crowded streets; and a young woman running weeping thus in broad daylight through the streets of a city could not but create a sensation. People stood still while small boys started in pursuit, and their numbers kept increasing. In the clatter behind her Petra heard the rumbling sounds of that night in her loft chamber, she recalled the faces in the air and sped swiftly onward. But recollection grew with every step, and so did the noise behind her, and when she had reached the house and torn open the street door, gained her own room, and locked herself in, she had to fling herself in a corner and ward off the faces that assailed her; she drove

them away with her hands, with menacing gestures, then sank exhausted and wept more softly — and was saved.

That same afternoon, toward evening, she left Bergen, and started inland. Whither she was bound she knew not herself; she only wanted to go where she was not known. She rode in a cariole, with her trunk strapped on behind and a post-boy sitting on it. The rain was pouring down in torrents, and she sat crouching beneath a huge umbrella, gazing timidly up at the mountain and then down at the precipice at her side. A brooding mass of fog hung over the forest in front of her, filled with spectres; in the next moment she would be there; but the nearer she drew the more the fog receded. A mighty roaring, growing ever stronger, increased the feeling that she was journeying onward through a mysterious region, where everything had its own significance, its own obscure connection, and where mortal was but a timid wayfarer who had to be ever on his guard if he wished to make progress. The roar came from many forces swollen by the rain until they had become giants, and now plunged madly from precipice to precipice with a thundering crash. The

road led over narrow bridges, and Petra could see the seething and foaming of the waters in the depths below. Anon it wound and curved down the mountains, here and there bringing to view some solitary cultivated spot, dotted with turf-thatched cottages, then leading upward again toward the forest and the boom of the falling waters. Her clothes were wet through and she was cold ; but she was resolved to pursue her way onward as long as daylight lasted, onward the next day, too, ever farther inland until she reached a spot where she dared feel secure. Thither would the Almighty help her, He who was guiding her now through darkness and tempest.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN those sheltered, fertile valleys, scattered through the mountains in the diocese of Bergen, a mild autumn sometimes has summer-like days even late in the season. Then the cattle are driven out to pasture a while at noon, even after they have already been taken in to winter fodder; thus they become fat and frolicsome, and present a lively scene when they are brought home again in the afternoon.

And so it chanced that the cattle were coming down the mountain-path, cows, sheep, and goats, lowing, bleating, skipping to the tinkling of bells and turning into a large gard, just as Petra drove by. The weather was fine; every pane of the long white wooden building glittered in the sunshine, and above the house loomed the mountain, so densely covered with fir, birch, bird-cherry, and ash, and on the crags with dog-rose, that the houses could not help gaining warmth therefrom. In front of the main building, on the side nearest the road, there was a garden full of apple and red and

black cherry trees, with long paths and hedges of currant, gooseberry, and black currant bushes ; but high above them all some venerable ash trees reared their broad crowns. The house looked like a nest hidden away among the foliage, and accessible to the sun alone. But it was just this appearance of concealment that aroused a longing within Petra, and the sun glittering on the window-panes and the alluring tinkle of the merry bells strengthened it, and when she heard that this was a parsonage, she hastily seized the reins. "Ah, I must enter here!" cried she, and turning, drove in past the garden.

A couple of Lapland dogs rushed savagely at her as she drove into the farm-yard, which was a large square surrounded by buildings, with the stable directly opposite the main building ; another wing of the latter to the right, and the brew-house and servants' hall to the left. The farm-yard was now filled with cattle, and in their midst stood a lady, rather tall and of graceful, refined form. She wore a close-fitting dress and had a kerchief tied about her head ; round about her, and close up to her, were the goats, white, black, brown, and speckled ones, all wearing little bells that were tuned in thirds. She had a name for each goat and

something good in a dish which the dairy-maid constantly replenished.

On the low steps leading from the main building to the court stood the priest, with a dish of salt in his hand, and in front of him stood the cows, licking salt from his hand and from the flag-stone on which he strewed it. The priest was not a tall man, but was solid-looking, with a short neck and a narrow forehead ; his bushy brows overhung a pair of eyes which seemed averse to looking straight before them, but from which now and then shot radiant sidelong glances. His closely-cropped, thick hair was gray and bristled out in every direction ; there was almost as heavy a growth on his neck as on his head ; he wore no neck-tie, only a shirt-stud ; the shirt was open in front, exposing the hairy breast ; nor was it buttoned at the wrists, and the wristbands fell over the small, strong, begrimed hands that were dealing salt. Both hands and arms were overgrown with hair. He cast a sharp side-glance at the young stranger, who had alighted and threaded her way in among the goats, until she stood beside his daughter. What the two were talking about he could not possibly hear for the cattle, the dogs, and the bells ; but now both ladies turned their eyes toward him and sur-

rounded by goats approached the steps. At a sign from the priest a herd-boy drove back the cows. Signe, the priest's daughter, called, and Petra was forced to notice her melodious voice —

“Father, here is a lady on a journey who would like to rest with us for a day.”

“She is welcome!” was the priest's reply, and handing the dish to one of the boys, he entered his study to the right, most likely to attend to his toilet. Petra followed the young lady of the house into the passage, which, properly speaking, should be termed a hall, it was so light and broad; she settled with the post-boy, her luggage was carried into the house, and she herself went into a side-room, opposite the study to make some changes in her dress, and then returned to the hall to be ushered into the family sitting-room.

What a large, bright room! The wall toward the garden was nearly all windows, and the middle one of these served also as a door to the garden. The windows were broad and high, and extended almost to the floor, and they were filled with flowers. The floor in front of the windows was covered with flower-pots; there were flowers, too, on the window-sills, and, in the place of curtains, ivies, grow-

ing out of two small flower baskets on either side of the window, were gracefully festooned. And there were shrubs and flowers out of doors, in the garden below, near the house, creeping over the walls, and finally on the ground round about; it seemed like entering a hot-house built in the centre of a garden. And yet it was scarcely possible to remain a moment in this room before the flowers ceased to attract the attention; it was the solitary church, standing on an eminence to the right, that was now seen, and the blue waters that reflected its image and then flowed glittering onward far away among the mountains, so far that it was impossible to decide whether it was a lake or an arm of the sea. And then these mountains themselves! Not solitary peaks, but chains of mountains, one mighty ridge perpetually rising behind the other as though here were the limits of human habitations.

When Petra withdrew her eyes the whole room seemed consecrated by the view without; everything was pure and light, and served as a flower frame-work to that grand picture. She felt as if encompassed by some unseen power that heeded her actions, aye, even her thoughts; she walked about involuntary examining her surroundings and touching the various objects

in the room. Above the sofa, on the long wall facing the light, she then saw a life-sized portrait of a lady who was smiling down at her. She sat with her head slightly inclined to one side and with her hands clasped; her right arm was resting on a book that bore the inscription "Sabbath Book." Her light hair, her transparent complexion, seemed to invest with Sabbath-like repose all that she beamed upon. Her smile was earnest; but the earnestness was that of resignation. She seemed to have the power of making every one love her; and she seemed to have comprehension for all, because she saw in everything the good alone. Her face bore traces of feeble health, but this weakness might have been her strength; for surely there could have existed no one who would have been willing to take advantage of it. A wreath of immortelles hung over the frame, — she was dead.

"That is my mother's picture," Petra heard in gentle tones behind her, and turning, she saw the daughter, who had left the room and had now returned.

Henceforth the portrait filled the whole room: everything led up to it; everything was invested with its light; everything else was arranged with reference to it; and the daughter

was its peaceful reflection. Rather more silent, rather more reserved seemed the daughter. The mother's eyes met every gaze with a full, clear light; the daughter's drooped, yet they had the same brightness and gentleness. She had her mother's build, yet no indication of delicate health; on the contrary, the bright colors of her close-fitting dress, her apron, and her little neckerchief, that was fastened with a Roman pin, invested her face with a glow of freshness, and evinced a grace and a love of beauty that made her worthy to be the daughter of her in the portrait and the guardian spirit of this home. As she moved about among her mother's flowers, Petra's heart yearned toward her. In the society of this young girl and in this home all the good within her must find growth. Ah, if she could only abide within these blessed precincts! Doubly desolate did she feel as her eyes now intently followed Signe, who glided softly through the room, pausing here and there. Signe felt this, and tried to avoid her gaze; but in vain, and so she became embarrassed, and bowed over the flowers. At length Petra realized her rudeness, and, much ashamed, wished to apologize, but there was something in this carefully-arranged hair, this delicate brow, this neatly-

fitting dress that bade her beware. She looked up at the portrait. She could have thrown herself into that mother's arms without hesitation. Did it not seem as though she had a welcome for her? Dared she believe it? Yes, indeed, for thus no one had ever looked at her before. That look showed that she knew everything that had befallen the wayfarer and would yet forgive her. Petra was sadly in need of forbearance, and she found it impossible to turn away from these benevolent eyes; she held her head on one side, as the figure in the portrait did; she clasped her hands as those hands were clasped, and looked around almost unconsciously.

"Please let me stay here!" exclaimed she.

Signe rose and turned toward her, too much amazed to reply.

"Please let me stay here!" begged Petra, once more taking a step towards Signe. "It is so delightful here!" she added, and her eyes filled with tears.

"I will ask father to come in," said the young lady.

Petra followed her with her eyes until she had entered the study; but no sooner was she alone than she became frightened at what she had done, and trembled when she saw the

priest's astonished face in the door. He came rather better dressed than when she had last seen him, and he had his pipe in his mouth. He held it with a firm grip, letting the mouth-piece slip from his lips with every whiff he drew and puffing the smoke out again in three columns, each time with a little smack; this he did several times, standing right in front of Petra, in the middle of the floor, without really looking at her, but as though waiting for her to speak. She dared not repeat her entreaty before this man, he looked so stern.

"You want to remain here?" he asked, bestowing on her a short, bright side-glance.

Alarm made her voice quiver.

"I have no place where I can go."

"Where do you come from?"

In a low tone Petra mentioned her native town and her own name.

"What brought you here?"

"I do not know — I am seeking — I wish to pay — I — Ah, I do not know," and she turned away, unable for a moment to utter another word, but summoning courage, she said:—

"I will do all you ask of me, if I may only stay here and not have to travel farther — and not have to entreat you any more."

The daughter had come into the room with

her father, but had stopped by the stove, where she stood, with downcast eyes, toying with the rose-leaves lying there to dry. The priest did not reply, the puffing from his pipe was the only sound to be heard, while he gazed alternately at Petra, his daughter, and the portrait. Now, the same object may produce totally different impressions: for while Petra prayed that the portrait might inspire him with forbearance, it seemed to him that it whispered, "Guard our child! Do not give her the companionship of one who is unknown to you!"

"No — you cannot stay," said he, turning with a sharp side-look to Petra.

Petra grew pale, heaved a deep, passionate sigh, gazed wildly about her, and rushed into a side-room, whose door stood half open, flung herself down by a table, and, burying her face, wholly gave way to her grief and disappointment.

Father and daughter exchanged glances. This total lack of good breeding shown in bursting without a word into another room and there seating herself alone, had only its counterpart in the strange conduct of coming in from the highway, begging to be allowed to remain, and wailing aloud when not permitted to do so. The priest crossed the floor after

her, not to speak to her, but, on the contrary, to close the door behind her. He came back, his face flushed, and said, in a low tone, to his daughter, who still stood by the stove: —

“Did you ever see the like of that woman? Who is she? What does she want?”

The daughter did not reply immediately; but when she did, she spoke in a still softer tone than her father.

“She acts strangely, but there is something remarkable about her.”

The priest was pacing the floor, and kept watching the door; finally he paused, and whispered, —

“Do you think her mind is sound?” and as Signe did not answer, he came nearer, repeating more decidedly, “She is mad, Signe, half-witted: that is what is remarkable about her.”

He resumed his walk; other thoughts began to work in his mind, he had almost forgotten what he had last said, when his daughter at length whispered, —

“I cannot think so; but she is certainly very unhappy.”

With this she bowed over the dried rose-leaves she was still fingering. There was nothing in the ring of her voice nor in her movements that would have attracted the attention

of another, but her father's manner changed at once ; he walked up and down several times, his eyes fixed on the portrait, and finally said, but very softly, —

“ Do you think that, because she looks unhappy — mother would have asked her to stay ? ”

“ Mother would have given no answer for several days,” whispered the daughter, bowing still lower over the rose-leaves.

The slightest remembrance of her in the portrait, when brought forward thus by the daughter, could make that hairy lion's head as meek as a lamb's. He felt at once the truth of what Signe said ; he stood like a school-boy who has been caught in deception ; he forgot to smoke or to walk, and after a long while he whispered, —

“ Ought I to ask her to remain a few days ? ”

“ Why, you have given her your answer.”

“ Yes, but it is one thing to give her a home, another to let her stay a few days.”

Signe seemed to reflect a while, and said finally, —

“ You must do as seems best to you.”

The priest felt inclined to consider the proposal somewhat more closely, so he walked to and fro, smoking vigorously. Pausing, finally he said, —

“ Will you go in, or shall I ? ”

“ It would certainly do more good if you were to speak to her,” said the daughter, looking up, lovingly.

He was just about taking hold of the door-knob, when a burst of laughter rang out from the next room, — then all was still, and then came another loud peal. The priest, who had started back, hurried forward again, his daughter following him, for they were both sure that the stranger must have suddenly become ill.

On opening the door they beheld Petra sitting where she had first dropped down, and in front of her lay an open book, over which she had cast herself without being aware of it. Her tears had rolled down on its leaves, and seeing this she had made an effort to remove their traces, when she was attracted by one of those coarse expressions, which she well remembered from her street life, but which she could never have believed any book would venture to reproduce. Thoroughly aghast she forgot to weep, and sat staring at the book. What madness in the world could this be ! She read with mouth wide open ; it grew worse and worse, so coarse, but so irresistibly ludicrous that she could not possibly help reading on. She read until she had lost consciousness

of everything about her ; she read herself away from care and sorrow, from time and place, with old Father Holberg, for it was he ! She laughed, she roared with laughter, even now that the priest and his daughter were standing over her, she did not see their earnestness, did not remember her errand, but laughing, asked, —

“What is this? What in all the world is this?” and she herself turned to the title-page.

Then the color forsook her face ; she looked up at them, then down again into the book at those familiar strokes. There are some things that strike the heart with the force of a bullet, things we think we have fled a hundred miles away from, but which unexpectedly rise up and confront us. Here on the first page was written, “Hans Ödegaard.” Her face became suffused with hot blushes. Petra sprang up, crying, —

“Is this book his? Is he coming here?”

“He has promised to do so,” replied Signe.

And now Petra remembered that there was a priest’s family in the diocese of Bergen, whom Ödegaard had met when traveling abroad. She had only been moving round in a circle ; she had fled straight towards him.

“Is he likely to come soon? Is he perhaps

here already?" She seemed ready to renew her flight immediately.

"No, indeed, he is ill," said Signe.

"Ah, that is true, he is ill," repeated Petra, in a tone of anguish.

"But tell me," burst out Signe, "you surely cannot be" —

"The fisher maiden?" completed the priest.

"Yes, I am the fisher maiden," said Petra, bestowing on him a look of entreaty.

They knew her well here, for Ödegaard had talked of nothing else.

"This alters the case," said the priest, who perceived that here there was something broken, something that needed the aid of friends. "You may remain for the present," he added.

Petra raised her eyes, and as she did so, she saw the look of thanks his daughter bestowed on him. This did her so much good that she walked right up to Signe, took both her hands, — more she dare not do, — and said, very bashfully, though, —

"I will tell you all as soon as we two are alone."

An hour later Signe knew Petra's whole history and immediately imparted it to her father. According to his advice Signe wrote the same day to Ödegaard, and continued to do so as long as Petra remained in the house.

But when Petra lay down to rest that evening on the large feather bed in the cosy chamber, with crackling birch-wood in the stove, and the New Testament between the two candles on the snowy-white dressing-table, she gave thanks to her God, as she grasped the Book, for all He had given her, the evil as well as the good.

The priest, as a young man with ardent nature and native powers of eloquence, had wished to study theology. His wealthy parents had opposed him in this; they preferred to see him choose what they called an independent calling; but their opposition only increased his zeal, and when he had taken his degree he went abroad to continue his studies. During a preliminary sojourn in Denmark he frequently met a lady who belonged to a sect which did not seem to him rigorous enough in its views, and to which he was consequently averse. He was continually desiring to influence her; but the manner in which she looked at him and thereby silenced him, whenever he attempted to do so, he could never forget during the whole time he remained abroad. When he returned to Denmark he sought her at once. They passed much time together

and grew in each other's favor, until they became engaged and were shortly after married. Now, however, it proved that each had cherished a secret thought: he had proposed to draw her womanly grace over to his gloomy doctrines; while she had felt a child-like confidence that she could enlist all his power and eloquence in the service of her religion. His first faint effort was met by *her* equally feeble one; he drew back disappointed, suspicious. She was not slow to perceive this, and thenceforth he was perpetually on his guard against her efforts, she on her guard against his. Neither of them, however, ever made another attempt; for they had both become alarmed. He was afraid of his own passionate nature, and she feared that an unsuccessful attempt might ruin her chances of winning him, for she never relinquished her hope; this had become her life task. But there never was any contest; for where she was no strife was possible. His active will, his suppressed passion, must have an outlet, and this they found each time he ascended the pulpit and saw her sitting below. Irresistibly he drew the congregation into the vortex with him; he created a general agitation, and was excited thereby in return. Seeing this her troubled heart found solace in be-

nevolence, and by and by, when she became a mother, she took her daughter in bodily and spiritual embrace and made the child share her own hours of solitude. There she gave, there she received, there she cradled, her own cherished views in her child's innocent heart ; there she held a love feast, and from it she came back to him, that stern man, with the combined gentleness of the woman and the Christian. At such times it was impossible for him to say anything that was not kind. He could not help loving her beyond all else on earth ; but all the more sorrowful did this make him, all the more did his heart bleed that he could not help her to work out her salvation. With a mother's quietly asserted right she removed her child, too, from his religious instructions. Soon the child's songs, the child's questions, were a new source of pain to him ; and when in the pulpit he became wrought up to harshness through his violent emotions, his wife only met him with increased mildness when they set out together for home ; her eyes spoke, but her lips uttered not a word. And the little daughter clung to his hand and looked up at him with eyes that were her mother's.

Every subject was discussed in their home except the one which was the root of all their

thoughts. But such an exhausting strain could not last any great length of time. She continued to smile, but only because she dared not weep. When the time approached for the daughter to prepare for confirmation, and he by virtue of his office could draw her as quietly over to his instruction as the mother had hitherto held her under hers, the tension reached its climax, and after the sermon, when the names of the candidates for confirmation were announced, the mother fell ill, in about the same way that people usually become weary. She said, smilingly, that now she could not walk any more, and a few days later, quite as smilingly, that now she could not sit up any longer either. She wanted her daughter with her all the time, for, although she could not talk with her, she could look at her. And the daughter, knowing what her mother liked best, read to her from the Book of Life and sang to her the hymns she had taught her in childhood, those new, cheerful hymns of the religious society to which the mother belonged. The priest for a long time failed to comprehend what was in store for him; but *when* he understood it all else vanished, he could think of but one thing, and that was to have her say something to him, just a few words. This, however, she

was unable to do ; she could no longer speak. He stood at the foot of the bed, gazing at her and entreating her ; she smiled at him until he fell on his knees, and grasping the daughter's hand, placed it in the mother's, as though he would say, "Here, keep her — she shall be yours forever !" Then the mother smiled, as she had never smiled before, and with the smile still on her lips she passed away from him.

For a long time after this no one could gain access to the priest ; another was appointed to assume the charge of his parish ; he himself went wandering about from room to room, from spot to spot, as though seeking something. He stepped softly ; when he spoke it was in a subdued tone, and only by falling wholly into his hushed ways could his daughter gradually succeed in entering into fellowship with him. Now she aided him in his search ; the mother's words were all called up ; her wishes became the law according to which they proceeded. The daughter's intercourse with her, from which he had been shut out, he now for the first time entered into. From the first moment the child could recollect, everything was lived through anew ; the mother's hymns were sung, her

prayers were prayed, the sermons she had been fondest of were read one by one, and her interpretations, her remarks, faithfully recalled. Thus roused to activity, the priest soon felt a desire to visit the spot where he had found her, in order that he might in the same way follow in her footsteps. They went, and he regained his health by thoroughly making her life his own. A beginner himself, he keenly appreciated all beginnings about him, the great national ones, the lesser political ones; and this restored to him his youth. His powers streamed back upon him, his yearnings at the same time — now he wanted to proclaim the Word so that it might be a preparation for life as well as for death !

Before again shutting himself up in his mountain parish with his beloved work, he felt an impulse to take a wider view of the outside world. So he and his daughter extended their travels, and now their lives were filled with the grandest remembrances.

Among these people Petra lived.

CHAPTER IX.

IN the third year of her sojourn here, one Friday, a few days before Christmas, the two girls were sitting together in the dusk of the evening ; the priest had just come in with his pipe. The day had been passed as most others during these two years ; it had begun with a walk, and after breakfast an hour had been spent in playing and singing, next came language lessons or other studies, and then a little time devoted to household matters. In the afternoon they retired to their own rooms, and to-day Signe had been writing to Ödegaard, after whom Petra never inquired ; indeed, she never could bear any reference to the past. Toward evening they had gone coasting, and had now met to talk and sing, or later, to read aloud. It was at such times the priest always joined them. He was a remarkably fine reader and so was his daughter. Petra learned the style of both, but especially their language. Signe's pronunciation and the inflections of her voice had a great charm for Petra, and the mu

atical tones kept ringing in her ear when she was alone. Altogether, Petra held Signe in such high esteem that a man would have taken a fourth of such devotion for strong love ; she often positively made Signe blush. As the priest and his daughter read aloud every evening, — Petra could not be induced to take active part in the readings, — they had become quite familiar with the prominent authors of northern literature, and had also made considerable progress in the acquaintance of the works of well-known foreign authors. The dramatists were chiefly read.

Just as they were about lighting the lamps to begin this evening, the kitchen-maid came in to say that there was some one outside who had a message for Petra. It proved to be a sailor from Petra's native town, whom her mother had charged to seek her, as he was coming in that direction. He had walked nearly seven miles, and must hurry off again, as his ship was about to sail. Petra accompanied him part of the way, desiring to talk further with him, for she knew him to be a trusty man. It was a very cloudy night ; there was no light in any of the parsonage windows, except those of the laundry, where a large washing was being done ; profound darkness reigned

along the road ; it was scarcely possible to distinguish the path until the moon rose triumphantly above the mountains. Still Petra walked bravely onward, and fearlessly entered the forest, although mysterious, unearthly shadows crept about among the fir-trees. One piece of news which had especially tempted her to follow the sailor was that Pedro Ohlsen's mother was dead, and that he himself had sold his house and moved to Gunlaug's, where he now occupied Petra's loft chamber. This had happened nearly two years since, but Petra's mother had not said a word about it in her letters. Petra could now readily conjecture who it was wrote these for her mother. She had often inquired, but had received no reply, and yet every letter ended with the words : "and 'a greeting from the person who writes the letter." The sailor's errand was to ask how long Petra intended to remain at the parsonage and what plans she had for the future. To the first question she replied that she did not know, and to the second that he might tell her mother there was but one thing in the world she wished to do, and if she failed in that she would be unhappy her whole life ; but for the present she could not tell what 't was.

While Petra was walking and talking with

the sailor, the priest and Signe remained behind in the sitting-room, speaking of her who was such a source of joy to them both. They were interrupted by the entrance of the overseer, and after he had rendered his account for the day, he asked if either of them knew that the young lady who was staying with them was in the habit of leaving her room at night by means of a rope-ladder and returning in the same way. He was obliged to repeat this three times before either of them understood what he meant; he might just as well have announced to them that it was her wont to walk back and forth on the moonbeams. It was dark in the room, and now it became perfectly still; not even the puffing from the priest's pipe was heard.

"Who has seen this?" said the priest at last, in a forced, husky tone of voice.

"I saw it myself. I was up foddering the horses; it must have been about one o'clock."

"You saw her going down a rope-ladder?"

"And up again."

Another long pause. Petra's room was in the upper story, in the corner facing the avenue leading to the house. She was alone up there, no one else had a room on that side of the house. There could, therefore, be no mistake.

"It is quite possible she may have done it in her sleep," said the servant, and was about to withdraw.

"Yes, but she could not have made a rope-ladder in her sleep," said the priest.

"Well, that was what I thought myself, and so it seemed to me best to tell you about it, sir. I have not spoken of it to any one else."

"Has any one beside yourself seen this?"

"No; but if you doubt it, sir, the ladder itself will, I suppose, be proof enough. If it is not up in her chamber I must have seen wrong."

The priest rose at once.

"Father!" entreated Signe.

"Bring a light!" replied the priest, in a tone that admitted of no opposition.

Signe lighted a candle.

"Father!" she once more implored, as she handed it to him.

"Yes; I am her father as well as yours, as long as she remains in my house, and it is my duty to look into this."

The priest went on in advance with the light, Signe and the overseer following. Everything was in perfect order in the little room, only the table in front of the bed was covered with open books, piled one upon another.

“ Does she read at night ? ”

“ I do not know ; but she never puts out her light before one o'clock.”

The priest and Signe exchanged glances. It was customary at the parsonage to retire for the night from ten to half-past ten, and to assemble again in the morning between six and seven.

“ Do you know anything of this ? ” asked the father.

Signe made no reply. But the overseer, who was on his knees in the corner making a search, answered, —

“ She is not alone.”

“ What is that you say ? ”

“ Why, there is always some one talking with her, and they often speak very loud. I have heard her both begging for mercy and herself uttering threats. No doubt she is in some one's power, poor thing ! ”

Signe turned away ; the priest had grown deathly pale.

“ And here is the ladder,” continued the man, producing the article as he spoke, and rising to his feet. The ladder was formed by two clothes-lines, fastened together by a third, which was tied in a knot, then drawn across and tied in another knot, at a distance of about

half a yard, and thus running back and forward formed steps.

"Was she gone long?" asked the priest.

The overseer looked at him.

"Gone where?"

"Did she stay away long after she came down the ladder?"

Signe was shivering with cold and terror.

"She did not go anywhere; she went up again."

"Up again? Then who did go away?"

Signe turned and burst into tears.

"There could not have been any one with her then; that was last evening."

"So, no one was on the ladder but herself?"

"No."

"And she went down and directly up again?"

"Yes."

"She has only wanted to try it, I suppose," said the priest, drawing a long breath, as though somewhat relieved.

"Yes, before she allowed any one else to get on it," added the overseer.

The priest looked at him.

"You think, then, this is not the first one she has made?"

"Of course it is not. How else could people have come to her room?"

"Has it been long since you knew of any one coming to her?"

"Not until this winter, when she began to use a light; it did not occur to me to come down here before."

"Then you have known this the whole winter. Why have you not told of it before?" the priest asked, sternly.

"I supposed that it was one of the household that was with her; but when I saw her last night on the ladder I first thought it might be some one else. Had it struck me sooner, I should have spoken of it."

"Well, it is plain enough, she has deceived us all!"

Signe raised her eyes in silent entreaty.

"She ought not, perhaps, to have her room so far away from the rest," suggested the overseer, as he rolled up the ladder.

"After this she ought not to have a room anywhere in this house," said the priest, and left the room, the rest following him. But when he got down-stairs and had put the light on the table, Signe came and flung herself into his arms.

"Yes, my child, this is a bitter disappointment," said he.

A few moments later, Signe sat in the corner of the sofa, with her handkerchief to her eyes: the priest had lighted his pipe and was rapidly pacing the floor. All at once they were aroused by screams from the kitchen and hurried steps were heard on the stairs and rushing along the passage above. Both hastened out. Petra's chamber was on fire! A spark from the candle had fallen in the corner, — for it was from there the fire came, — had swept along the wall paper, and was approaching the wood-work about the window, when it was seen from the road by a passer-by, who had at once run into the laundry and given the alarm to the people who were at work washing there. The fire was soon extinguished; but in the country, where everything has its own monotonous course, year out and year in, any disturbance serves to throw the people into a state of commotion. Fire is their greatest and most dangerous enemy; it is never out of their thoughts, and when it actually does appear some night, thrusting forth its head from the abyss, and greedily darting out its tongue after its prey, the people shudder, and it is weeks before they wholly regain their composure; some, indeed, never do so throughout their lives.

When the priest and his daughter were once

more alone in the sitting-room and had lighted the lamps, they both felt uncomfortable at the thought that Petra's room had thus swiftly been swept out by fire and everything that could remind them of her destroyed. Suddenly they heard Petra's clear voice asking questions and exclaiming aloud. She sprang up-stairs and down again, sped from chamber to passage and from passage to kitchen, and finally burst into the room with her out-door wraps still on.

"Good heavens! my room has been burned!" cried she.

There was no reply, but in the same breath, she asked, —

"Who has been there? When did it happen? How did the fire begin?"

The priest now said that it was he and Signe who had been up there; they had been looking for something, and he fixed his eyes sharply on Petra as he spoke. But not by the least sign did she show that she thought this strange, nor did she betray any uneasiness whatever as to what they might have seen in her room. She did not even suspect anything amiss when Signe did not look up from her sofa corner, but attributed this to Signe's fright and began to pour out a volley of questions about how the fire had been discovered, how put out, and who

had first reached the spot; and when she failed to get replies fast enough she darted out of the room as abruptly as she had come in. Presently she broke in again, having now partly removed her out-door wraps, and fell to telling the priest and Signe how the whole thing had happened, how she herself had seen the flames and hastened home with the most alarming speed, and how thankful she felt to find matters no worse. While speaking she took off the rest of her out-door things, carried them away, then returned, and took her accustomed place at the table, keeping up an incessant chatter about what this one had said, that one had done. The whole gard had been turned upside down, she reported, and this afforded her infinite amusement. As her listeners persisted in their silence, she began to express regret that all this excitement had spoiled the evening for them; she had been looking forward with so much pleasure to "Romeo and Juliet," the play they were then reading aloud, and she had intended that same evening to ask Signe to read aloud once more the scene that seemed to her the most beautiful of all: Romeo's parting from Juliet on the balcony. In the midst of her stream of words one of the maids came in from the laundry to say that they needed

clothes-lines ; a whole bunch was missing. Petra's face was speedily covered with blushes.

"I know where they are ; I will get them for you," she said, taking a few steps forward, and then, remembering the fire, she paused and colored still more deeply.

"But, — oh, dear! they must be burned! They were in my chamber!"

Signe had turned eagerly toward her. The priest gave Petra a sharp side glance.

"What use had you for clothes-lines?" And his breath came and went so rapidly, he could scarcely speak.

Petra looked at him ; his terrible solemnity almost alarmed her, but in the next moment it tempted her to laughter. This she strove against for a while, but a second glance at him made her burst into such hearty laughter that it was no longer of any use to resist. There was no more evil conscience in her laugh than in a rippling brook. Signe knew this from its ring, and she sprang up from the sofa, with —

"What is it? What is it?"

Petra turned, laughed, bounded off, tried to escape, and made for the door. But Signe stood in her way.

"What is it? Tell me, Petra."

Petra buried her face on Signe's shoulder,

as though she would thus hide herself, but she continued to laugh immoderately. Nay, guilt does not act thus! The priest, too, comprehended this now. He who was about leaping up into a towering rage, now instead came tumbling down into the most overpowering laughter, and Signe followed his example. Nothing is more infectious than laughter, and especially laughter, the cause of which is not quite clear. The vain efforts that now the priest, now Signe made to find out what they were laughing at only increased the merriment to the highest pitch. The maid, who stood waiting, was finally compelled to laugh aloud with them. She burst out into one loud horse-laugh after the other, and she felt herself that it was not in keeping with such fine furniture and gentle-folks, and so she hastened to the door to give full vent to her hilarity in the kitchen. Thither, of course, she bore the infection, and soon a perfect deluge of laughter came rolling in from the kitchen, where there was even less knowledge of its cause than in the parlor, and this kindled the laughter in there anew.

When finally they were almost exhausted, Signe made a last attempt to learn the meaning of all this laughter.

“Now you shall tell me,” she cried, clinging to Petra’s hand.

“No ; not for all the world !”

“Yes ; but I know already what it is !” she cried again.

Petra looked at her and uttered a scream ; but Signe exclaimed, —

“Father knows all about it, too.”

Petra did not scream now, she fairly yelled, and, tearing herself away, fled to the passage-door ; but there Signe caught her again. Then Petra turned to struggle with her ; she was determined to get away at any cost ; she laughed as she kept struggling, but tears were in her eyes. This made Signe let go. Out rushed Petra, Signe after her, and both darted into Signe’s chamber. There Signe seized Petra about the neck, and Petra flung her arms around Signe.

“Good heavens ! Do you know it ?” whispered Petra, and Signe whispered in reply : —

“Yes, we were up in your room with the overseer ; he had seen you — and we found the ladder.”

Another shriek and a fresh flight, but this time only as far as the sofa corner, where Petra took refuge. Signe soon followed her, and, bending over her, poured into her ear the

whole story of the voyage of discovery and its fiery results. That which but a brief period earlier had caused her both tears and alarm now struck her as amusing, and she related it with considerable humor. Petra alternately listened and stopped her ears, looked up, and buried her face. When Signe had finished and they were both sitting side by side in the dark, Petra whispered : —

“Do you know what it all means? I cannot possibly sleep at ten o’clock when we go each to our rooms, what we have been reading has too much power over me. So I commit to memory all the finest passages, and in this way I know whole scenes by heart and repeat them aloud to myself. When we came to Romeo and Juliet, it seemed to me that nothing in the world could be more lovely; I grew perfectly wild about it, and I could not help making that attempt with the rope-ladder. It had never occurred to me before that any one could go up and down on a rope-ladder. I got hold of some clothes-lines, and that rogue, it seems, was standing below watching me. Indeed, it is no laughing matter, Signe; it is so tom-boyish; I never shall be anything but a tom-boy; and now, of course, to-morrow I shall be the talk of the whole parish!”

But Signe, who had been seized by a fresh fit of laughter, fell over Petra with kisses and caresses, and exclaimed : —

“ Ah, father must know this ! ”

“ Are you mad, Signe ? ”

Down they ran to the sitting-room, one after the other, with the same speed they had left it. At the door they almost upset the priest, who was just about leaving the room to see what had become of them. Signe began her story. Petra, with a scream, ran off once more, but paused outside of the door, recollecting that she should remain to prevent Signe from telling it ; so she thought she would go in again, but the priest held the door ; it was impossible to get it open. She pounded on it with both hands, sang, stamped her feet on the ground, in order to drown Signe’s voice ; but Signe only spoke the louder, and when the priest had heard the whole and had laughed as heartily as Signe over this new method of studying the classics, he opened the door ; but then Petra ran away.

After supper, at which Petra had been present and had been duly teased by the priest, she was condemned, by way of punishment, to repeat what she knew. It proved that she knew the most famous scenes, and not merely one rôle in each but all the parts. She recited just

as they had been in the habit of reading ; at times there was a flash of fire in her manner, but she quickly smothered it. No sooner did the priest observe this than he called for more expression, but she only grew the more shy. They went on and on, they continued for hours she knew the comic scenes as well as the tragic ones, the playful as well as the serious ; her memory aroused both their surprise and their laughter ; she laughed herself and begged them only to try, too.

“ I really wish the poor actresses had an eighth part as good faculties as you have,” said Signe.

“ God forbid that she should ever become a play-actor ! ” exclaimed the priest, suddenly turning grave.

“ Why, father, I hope you do not think Petra has any such idea ? ” cried Signe, laughing. “ I only spoke of actors because I have always found, without exception, that those who from their youth up have been trained to a knowledge of the poetry of their own land have not the least desire to go on the stage, while those who have very little acquaintance with poetry until they are grown up, rave about the stage it is the suddenly aroused yearning that carries them away.”

“That is doubtless very true,” said the priest. “We certainly rarely find a person of any education on the stage.”

“And still more rarely one who has had poetic culture.”

“Yes, and when this does happen, it is doubtless due to some lack in the character which permits variety and frivolity to gain the upper hand. I have met with many actors, both in my student days and during my travels, but I have never known, nor have I heard of any one else knowing, one who led a truly Christian life. They may have felt a desire for it — that I have seen ; but there is so much restlessness, so many disturbing influences, in their career, that they find it impossible to gain control over themselves, even long after they have left the stage. Whenever I have spoken with them about this, they have admitted it themselves and deplored it ; but soon, however, they have added : ‘We must console ourselves with the fact that, after all, we are no worse than so many others.’ But this is what I call a poor consolation. A life that in nowise tends to build up the Christian character within us is a sinful one. The Lord have mercy on all who must lead a life like this, and may He keep from it all who are pure in heart ! ”

The next day, Saturday, the priest was up as usual before seven, went on his morning rounds among his work-people, then took a longer walk and came home at day-break. Just as he was passing the house into the courtyard, he espied an open exercise-book, or something of that sort, which doubtless had been thrown out of Petra's window and not found because it was the color of the snow. He picked up the book and carried it into the study. As he spread it out to dry, he observed that it was a discarded French exercise-book in which verses were now written. It did not occur to him to look at these verses, but his eye accidentally fell on the word "actress," written up and down, up and down, everywhere—it was even to be seen in the verses. He sat down to examine it more fully.

After many attempts and erasures, he found the following rhymes, which, although still full of corrections, could readily be deciphered:—

" Dear, come hither, and listen to me,
While I whisper you trustfully what I would be!
I would fain be an actress, and show to mankind
The heart of a woman, her passions, her mind;
How she smiles and delights, how she mourns and deplores;
How wholly she trusts, how fondly adores:
How she smiles down on life, when tender and winning!
How she blights like a curse, when scornful and sinning!
O God! on my knees, Thine assistance I claim!
Devote Thou my life to this one cherished aim!"

A little below was written the following lines : —

“ O God, among Thy glorious band
Of workers let me take my stand ! ”

Then below this, again, probably by way of a commentary to a poem they had read some months before : —

“ Roaming, rambling over the lea,
Airily,
I 'll away, away,
A naiad — a fay —
With a ladder of moonbeams under my arm —
Warily!
A ladder of moonbeams, wrought by a charm,
Of moonbeams and mist,
By the long grasses kissed,
As I hide there, or wander wherever I list.
If any dare peep, as I 'm flashing along,
If any dare list, while I warble my song,
He shall die!
Shall he die? Nay, surely t 'were wrong.”

Then, after many erasures and crossings over, designs, and notes, came : —

“ Hop, sa, sa — hop, sa, sa,
Dancing with all, but with no one remaining,
Tra, la, la — tra, la, la,
Winning all hearts, but my own heart retaining.”

Then distinctly and clearly the following letter : —

MY HEART'S HENRY : — Do you not think that you and I are the cleverest ones in the

whole comedy? It will cause us great annoyance; but that does not signify: I empower you to accompany me to the masquerade to-morrow evening, for I have never been to one, and I long for some genuine mad pranks, because it is so very quiet and dull in this house.

You are a great rogue, Henry! Whither are you wandering, pray, while here sits your

PERNILLE?

Last of all was written in large letters, distinctly and over and over again, the following verse, she must have found somewhere, and had taken this means of committing it to memory:—

“Thoughts beyond my thought’s control
Wake a tumult in my soul;
They are strong and I am weak,
Power to give them birth I seek.
Thou, who gavest them to me,
Loke bind, set Balder free,
Satisfy the thirst for Thee;
Water from the hidden spring
Give me grace for men to bring.”

Many other things besides were written there, but the priest read no more.

So, then, it was in order to become an actress that she had come into his house and received instructions from his daughter. It was for this secret purpose she had listened so ea-

gerly while they read aloud every evening and committed it all to memory when she was alone. She had been deceiving them the whole time ; even yesterday, when she had pretended to open her heart to them, she had been concealing something ; when she was laughing the most heartily she was cheating them.

And this secret purpose of hers ! That which the priest had so often condemned in her presence, *she* glorified as a divine calling and dared to invoke God's blessing on it ! A life replete with exterior show and frivolity, idleness and sensuality, deceit and ever-increasing instability of character, a life over which vultures hover as over carrion ; it was to this she yearned to devote herself, this she prayed God to sanctify ! And to such a goal the priest and his daughter were expected to help her onward in the quiet parsonage, beneath the severe eyes of a regenerated congregation !

When Signe came in, bright and fresh as the winter morning, to greet her father, she found the study filled with tobacco-smoke. This was always an indication that something was amiss, and doubly so thus early in the morning. Without a word he handed her the book. She saw at once that it was Petra's ; a recollection of the suspicion and pain of the preceding even-

ing flashed over her ; she dared not look in the book ; her heart beat so violently that she was forced to sit down. But the same word that had first attracted her father's attention now caught her eye ; she had to look again and thus read all. Her first feeling was one of shame — not on Petra's account, but because her father had seen this.

But soon she experienced the deep humiliation that arises from being disappointed in one who has been dearly beloved. In such instances a person who has been capable of disguises is apt for a moment to seem greater, more ingenious, more clever than ourselves, to glide away from us into the regions of the mysterious. But soon all the faculties of the soul unite in indignation ; honesty gains power over all those forces which, although hidden, do not savor of the mysterious ; we feel strong enough to crush with one blow the manifold cunning devices ; we despise what but now humiliated us.

In the sitting-room Petra had seated herself at the piano, and now they heard her singing :

“ Joy now is kindled, risen the day,
Stormed are the Night's cloud prisons away,
Tents o'er the mountain-tops glowing,
Hosts of the Light-king are throwing.

'Up!' now cries the woodland bird,
'Up!' from childhood's lips is heard,
Up, too, my hope with sunrise."

Then a storm swept over the keys of the instrument, and out of it burst the following song: —

"Warning voices, I thank ye well,
But I and my boat are away,
To the sound of the luring billows' swell,
In the whirl of winds and of spray!
I must range the new path, I must hunt o'er the main,
Though I gaze on the Fatherland never again.

"Oh, not for pleasure and not for gain,
Drawn — drawn from the fading shore —
I would seek the bounds of the trackless plain,
The vast Unknown I'd explore.
So long as my bark cleaves the breakers in twain,
So long range I the path — so far hunt o'er the main."

Ah! this was more than the priest could bear! Striding past Signe, he snatched the book from her hand and stormed toward the door, and this time his daughter made no effort to hold him back. He rushed straight to Petra, flung the book on the piano in front of her, turned, and made the complete circuit of the room. When he came back to her she had risen, the book was clasped to her bosom, and she was looking about her on every side with a bewildered gaze. He paused in front of her, intending to tell her just what he thought of her, but so violent was his wrath at having

served as a tool for more than two years for this wily young person, and still more that his warm-hearted, devoted daughter had been made a dupe of, that he could not at once find words, and when he did succeed in doing so, he felt himself that they might be too harsh. Once more he took a turn about the room, walked right up in front of Petra again, his face fiery red, and then, without a single word, turned his back on her and strode away to his study. When he reached it, Signe was gone.

The whole of that day was passed by each in retirement. The priest dined alone ; neither of the girls made her appearance. Petra was in the housekeeper's room, which had been assigned to her after the fire. She had searched everywhere in vain for Signe to pour out her heart to her ; but Signe could not be at home.

Petra felt that she was standing on the verge of a crisis. The most secret thoughts of her soul had been rudely torn from her, and there was an effort about to be made to exert over her an influence she could not brook. She well knew that if she were to give up her cherished purposes, she would drift idly onward henceforth before the wind of chance. She could be happy with those that did rejoice, trustful with those whose hearts were filled

with trust, secure in everything; but it was through the strength inspired by that secret hope of hers that she might one day attain the goal of her aspirations toward which all the faculties of her soul were growing. Confide in any one after that first pitiful failure in Bergen — no, she would have found this impossible, even had it been Ödegaard himself! She must be alone with her secret until it was sufficiently developed to brave the breath of doubt.

But now a change had been wrought. The priest's flaming countenance looked incessantly down into her frightened conscience — she must seek deliverance. More excitedly, more hastily, than ever, she pursued her search for Signe; the afternoon wore on and still Signe was not to be found. The longer a person we are seeking remains absent from us, the greater seems the cause of the separation, and thus it came to pass that Petra finally arrived at the conclusion that she had been guilty of treachery in secretly availing herself of Signe's friendship for the furtherance of what Signe herself deemed sinful. The omniscient God must be her witness that never before had this view of the matter presented itself to her mind; she felt herself a great sinner.

As once before, in her own home, she was

overwhelmed by a knowledge of which but a moment previous she had not the faintest mis-giving! That anything so appalling actually could repeat itself, that she had not yet progressed one step, increased her anxiety to terror. She saw before her a future full of misery. But in the same proportion as her own sense of guilt increased, Signe's image rose in purity and magnanimous devotion. Truly, coals of fire were heaped upon her head. She longed to fling herself at Signe's feet; she wanted to entreat and implore her, and neither relax her hold nor cease her importunities until Signe had given her just one look of the old friendliness.

It had grown dark. Signe must be at home now, wherever she might have been. Petra sped along the passage to the wing of the house where Signe's room was, and found the door locked,—a sure sign that Signe was there. With throbbing heart Petra once more grasped the door-knob, and cried beseechingly:—

“Signe, please let me talk with you! Signe, I cannot bear this any longer!”

Not a sound from the room; Petra bent over, listened, and knocked again.

“Signe, oh, Signe! you do not know how unhappy I am!”

No answer. Again Petra waited and listened, but still there came none. When we thus fail to obtain a response, we are apt to doubt at last whether there is any one at hand to give it, even when we have reason to feel sure that there is, and when darkness surrounds us we become alarmed.

“Signe, Signe! If you are there, be merciful — answer me! Signe!”

But the silence remained unbroken. Petra shuddered and shivered. At this moment the kitchen-door was opened, letting out a broad, full stream of light, and brisk, buoyant footsteps were heard in the court-yard. This suggested a plan to Petra’s mind. She would go out into the yard herself, and climbing on the ledge on the stone foundation of the wing, she would walk round the entire building in order to reach the other side, where the elevation from the ground was very great. She wanted to look into Signe’s room.

It was a bright, starlit evening. The mountain, as well as the surrounding houses, stood out in sharp outlines, but the outlines alone were visible. The snow lay glittering around; the dark paths served only to increase its dazzling distinctness. From the road came the jingling of sleigh-bells; the merry sound and

the sparkling brightness of the night had an inspiring effect on Petra, and she sprang lithely on the ledge. She strove to cling to the projecting wood-work of the windows, but lost her balance and fell to the ground again. Then she seized an empty barrel, and rolling it up against the wall stepped on it and from it to the ledge. She now worked her way along by means of hands and feet together, advancing about a quarter of a yard with each effort; the strong fingers of a strong hand were needed to hold on vigorously; she could not get a firm grasp, for the wood-work scarcely projected an inch. She was fearful lest some one should see her, for it would naturally be thought this had some connection with her rope-ladder exploits. If she could only clear the side facing the court-yard, and reach the gable-wall. But when finally she succeeded in doing so, fresh danger awaited her; for there were no blinds to the windows, and she was compelled to stoop as she passed each window, in constant terror of falling. On the main wall of the wing the foundation was very high and beneath ran a gooseberry hedge, which would certainly receive her should she fall. But she had no fear. Her fingers smarted, her muscles quivered, a tremor ran through her whole frame

but she went on. Only a few steps more and the window was reached. There was no light in Signe's room, and the curtain had not yet been drawn down; the moon shone full in the room, so that the innermost corner was plainly visible. This gave Petra fresh courage. She reached the window-sill; she could at last take hold with her whole hand and rest, for now that the goal was reached, her heart began to throb so violently that she could scarcely breathe. As this only grew worse the longer she waited, she felt that she must make haste, and suddenly she leaned her whole person against the window. A wild cry broke from the room. Signe had been sitting on one corner of the sofa, and now with a bound she stood in the middle of the room, warding off the dreadful apparition, wildly and with gestures of horror, then turned and fled. This figure on the window-panes in the bright moonlight, this reckless, offensive daring, this face outlined by the moon, all aglow with excitement! In the twinkling of an eye Petra realized that her unlucky fancy in itself was enough to fill any one with terror, and that her image would no doubt henceforth be a continual source of terror to Signe; consciousness forsook her, and with a piercing shriek she fell to the ground.

Every person in the house had rushed out at Signe's cry, but had failed to find any one. This second cry set the whole gard astir, but all searching and shouting was in vain, until the priest chanced to look through the window in Signe's chamber and espied Petra lying among the bushes. A great fear fell upon every one around, and it cost some exertion to get her free from the brambles. She was carried into Signe's chamber, as there was no fire in the housekeeper's room, was undressed and put to bed, where her hands and neck, which were pretty badly torn, were bathed by some, while others made the room comfortable, bright, and warm.

The calm coziness of the room, the snowy white drapery of the windows, toilet-table, bed, and chairs, all made her think of Signe. She called to mind her pure, loving nature, her gentle voice, whose accents betokened the utmost guilelessness, her delicate comprehension of the thoughts of others, her tender benevolence. From all this she had now shut herself out; soon she would be banished from this room, in all probability obliged to leave the gard. And whither should she then go? People are not likely to be taken in a third time from the highway, and even if this were possible she no

longer desired it, for it would only end in the same way. Not a living soul could have confidence in her again ; whatever might be the cause of this, she felt that it was so. She had not gained one step, she felt that she would never advance any, for without the confidence of our fellow-creatures progress is an impossibility. How she prayed, how she wept ! She tossed and writhed in her anguish of spirit until she became exhausted and fell asleep.

Soon in her sleep everything became snowy white, gradually, moreover, lofty as well ; in her whole life she had never seen such lofty heights and such a dazzling glitter of millions of stars.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN she awoke she was still in those higher regions ; daylight's thoughts, which soon filled her mind, made an effort to soar up there, too, but they were taken captive and borne by something that filled the whole atmosphere, — it was the ringing of the bells on Sunday morning. She sprang out of bed and dressed herself ; then she found a little to eat in the pantry, put on some warm wraps, and hastened away, — she had never before so thirsted for the word of God ! When she came to the church, the service had just begun, and the door was closed ; it was a cold day, and her fingers smarted when she took hold of the door knob to turn it. The priest was just standing before the altar, and so she waited near the door until he was through saying mass. While the deacon was removing the chasuble she went to the so-called bishop's pew, which stood in the chancel with curtains around it. The priest's family had a pew in the gallery ; but when a person, for some reason or other, desired to sit

alone and hide from the sight of the others, it was customary to resort to the bishop's pew. When she reached it and stole in, she discovered Signe sitting there already in the inmost corner. She took one step to go out again, but just then the priest turned to leave the altar and pass her as he went to the vestry; she hastened into the pew again and sat down as far as possible from Signe, who had dropped her veil. This hurt Petra's feelings. She let her eyes wander over the congregation that filled the high wooden pews, the men on the right and the women on the left side. Their breaths filled the air above their heads like a floating mist; on the windows the frost was an inch thick, the clumsy wooden images, the dragging, heavy singing, the people wrapped in their winter clothes — all corresponded; everything seemed hard and far away — she was reminded of the impression she got on that memorable afternoon when she left Bergen; here, too, she was merely a timid traveler.

The priest appeared in the pulpit. He, also had a severe look. His prayer was: "Lead us not into temptation!" We are conscious, he said, that the faculties which God has given all have in them an element which tempts us to do wrong; but he besought God to be merciful

and not to try us beyond our strength. For this we must ever remember to pray ; for only when brought in subordination to Him would our talents and faculties work out our salvation.

In the sermon the priest further developed the same theme, discussing our double duty, that of performing our life-work, each in the position where his talents and circumstances have placed him, and that of bringing forth a truly Christian character in ourselves and in those intrusted to our care. We must be careful in the choice of our vocation, for there are vocations that are sinful in themselves, while there are other callings which may prove a source of sin to us, either because they are not suited to our capabilities, or because they suit too well our evil desires. Again : Certain as it is, that we must try to choose our work in accordance with our faculties, it is equally certain that a choice which seems both correct and good, may prove a source of temptation to us, if we, from love of it, permit it to consume all our time and occupy all our thoughts. Our duties as Christians must not be neglected any more than our obligations to our children. We must be able to concentrate our thoughts upon ourselves in order that the spirit of God

may be permitted to do its work in our hearts ; we must be able to plant and cherish the good seed of Christianity in the hearts of our children. There is no duty, no pretext, that can excuse us here, though the performance may be modified by circumstances.

Thereupon the priest went further, and entered into the vocation of *those* who sat before him ; he entered into their homes, their circumstances, and their opinions. Finally he produced a number of examples, by way of illustration, from other and higher walks in life, thus throwing side-lights on the topic discussed. The moment the priest became animated in his sermon, he seemed a new man to him who knew him only in every-day life. Even his external appearance was changed : his compact, strong face had become transparent, as it were, revealing the thoughts that throbbed within. His eyes grew larger, and in their firm and steadfast gaze was a message to every person in the congregation. His head, with its hairy mane, was magnified and made him look like a lion whose voice rolled out in long thunder tones, or came forth in short, violent phrases, sinking at times into a whisper, but only to rise again to greater heights. He could not in fact speak **except** before a large audience and under the in-

spiration of thoughts of eternity ; for there was no eloquence in his voice, before it reached a screaming pitch ; there was no expression in his countenance and no striking perspicuity in his thought, before it was all ablaze with zeal. Not that he had failed till now to find the theme to kindle it ; no, if affliction had gathered rich treasures into his soul, reflection had done no less. He was a hard worker, and devoted himself largely to retirement and reflection. But he was not always in the mood for the ordinary affairs of life ; his thoughts lacked the power of expression in conversation ; he must be allowed to do all the talking, or, at least, he must be vigorously pacing the floor, while the conversation was in progress. To begin a debate with him was almost like attacking a defenseless man, but still it was dangerous ; for his conviction soon made resistance with so much violence that there was no time for arguments. Were he, however, compelled to give reasons, he would do one of two things : he would either pour such a stream of words upon his opponent that the discussion was apt to end unpleasantly, or he would stop short, as if in fear of himself. No one could more easily be silenced than this strong, eloquent man.

When the priest began the prayer, Petra

trembled, for she understood whence the text was taken. The farther he progressed the nearer she felt he came to herself. She shrank back, and observed that Signe did the same. But the vigorous man cut his way without mercy; the lion was out seeking for prey, — Petra felt herself pursued on every side, hemmed in, and captured; but what was seized so harshly, was held gently in the hand of mercy. Without a word of condemnation she seemed to be laid captive in the arms of Him who is infinite love. And there she prayed, and wept, and she heard Signe do the same, and she loved her for it!

When the priest descended from the pulpit and passed Petra and Signe on his way to the vestry, his countenance still beamed from his communion with the Lord. His searching glance fell on Petra, but as she turned her open face toward him, a ray of gentleness met her. He looked hastily in the corner at his daughter, as he proceeded.

Shortly after Signe rose: her face was veiled, and so Petra did not dare go with her. She therefore lingered behind until later. Noon found all three together at the same table; the priest talked a little, but Signe was shy. As soon as the priest, who evidently desired to

talk about what had happened, made the faintest allusion to it, Signe turned the conversation in so modest and delicate a manner, that the priest was reminded of her mother ; he grew silent and gradually became sad. It took but little to make him so.

Nothing is more painful than an unsuccessful attempt at reconciliation. The family rose without being able to look at one another, much less to exchange the usual thanks for the repast. In the sitting-room the silence at length grew so oppressive that all three would fain have gone away, but no one wanted to be first to go. As for Petra, she felt that if she went, it would be never to return. She could not meet Signe again, if she could not be permitted to love her ; she could not endure to see the priest sad for her sake. But if she must leave, she must go without saying farewell, for how could she take leave of these people ! Only the thought of it produced an emotion which she could scarcely control.

Every minute which prolongs a situation so oppressive, when each waits for the other to speak, makes it more insufferable. No one dares to stir from fear of attracting attention ; every sigh is heard, the stillness itself is audible, for it seems like harshness. Suspense is

felt, because no word is spoken, and there is a dread lest somebody may say something.

Each one realized that this moment would never return. The walls that are built between heart and heart grow ; our own guilt increases, as does that of the others, with every breath we draw. We are by turns despondent and indignant ; for the person treating us thus is without compassion, is hard ; we will not bear it, we cannot forgive him. Petra could endure it no longer, she must either cry aloud or take flight !

Then sleigh-bells were heard in the road. Soon a man clad in a wolf-skin coat and seated in a sledge, with a driver behind on the box, was seen dashing past the garden and turning into the court-yard. All three now breathed more freely and waited for the relief which was coming ! They heard the stranger in the hall ; he was removing his traveling boots and coat and talking with the servant-girl who assisted him. The priest rose to meet the stranger, but turned again so as not to leave the two girls alone. Again the stranger's voice was heard in the hall, and now nearer, so that it made all three look up. But Petra rose and fixed her eyes on the door.

A knock was heard.

"Come in!" said the priest, much agitated. A man with a light complexion and spectacles stood in the door. Petra uttered a shriek and fell back in her chair. It was Ödegaard.

To the priest and Signe he did not come unexpected. He was to spend Christmas at the parsonage; but no one had said a word to Petra of this. That he came just at this moment, however, was a direct interposition of Providence, and this they all felt.

When Petra recovered her consciousness Ödegaard was standing before her and holding her hand. He continued to hold it, but said nothing; nor did she speak, she could not even rise. But a couple of tears rolled down her cheek, while she continued to fix her eyes on him. He was very pale, but his manner was perfectly calm and kind. He withdrew his hand, crossed the floor, and then went to Signe, who had stolen into the farthest window, behind her mother's flowers.

Petra longed to be alone, and so she left the room. Signe found plenty of household duties to keep her busy. The priest and Ödegaard, therefore, seated themselves in the study to drink a glass of wine, of which the traveler stood in need. Ödegaard was here briefly told of what the last days had brought forth. It

made him thoughtful, but he said nothing. Their conversation was interrupted in a singular manner.

Past the windows went two women and three men, one after the other, and the priest no sooner caught sight of them than he sprang to his feet and exclaimed, —

“There we have them again! Now we must arm ourselves with patience!”

Slowly and silently the women entered, followed by the men. They placed themselves in a line along the wall beneath the book-shelves and opposite the sofa where Ödegaard was sitting. The priest placed chairs before them, brought out others from the next room, and they all sat down, with the exception of a young city-dressed man, who refused and remained standing near the door. He had a defiant air, and kept both hands in his pockets.

After a long pause, during which the priest filled his pipe, and Ödegaard, who never smoked, carefully observed the visitors, a fair-complexioned, pale woman of about forty winters began the conversation. Her forehead was rather narrow, her eyes large, but restless; they did not seem to know which way to look. Finally she said, —

“That was a fine sermon you preached to-day, father. It suited well what has been in our minds of late ; for we at the Öygards have of late often had occasion to speak of temptation.”

And she sighed.

A man with a short, thick, double chin and a large broad face, also sighed, saying, —

“Lord, teach us Thy ways ! Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity ! ”

And Else, the woman who had first spoken, again sighed, as she said, —

“Lord, wherewithal shall the young cleanse their ways so that they may heed Thy word ? ”

The words sounded strange in her mouth, for she was no longer young. But a middle-aged man, who sat swaying back and forth with his head on one side, while his eyes were never really open, drawled out as if half asleep, the following lines : —

“None are safe from Satan’s guile,
Sore temptation, many a wile,
Must the Christian’s valor try,
Minded with his Lord to die.”

The priest knew these people too well not to understand that this was merely the introduction, so he waited as if nothing had been said, although there was again a long pause, broken only by repeated sighs.

A little woman, who seemed still smaller because she stooped, and who was wrapped up in such a lot of shawls that she looked like a bundle of merchandise, — her face was, indeed, quite invisible, — now began to move about uneasily in her chair, and at length gave two faint coughs.

This at once aroused Else, who said, —

“There is no more playing or dancing at the Øygards now ; but ” — she paused again, while Lars, the man with the broad face and short double chin, interposed, —

“But there is one man, and that is Hans, the fiddler, who *will not* give it up.”

As Lars, too, seemed to hesitate as to whether he should say the rest or not, the young man spoke : —

“For he knows that the priest, too, has an instrument, to which they both dance and sing here at the parsonage.”

“It can’t be a greater sin for him than it is for the priest,” said Lars.

“The fact is the priest’s instrument serves as a temptation,” said Else, cautiously, by way of helping on the conversation to the point in view.

But the young man added, with more emphasis, —

“It is a stumbling-block to the young. As it is written, ‘Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.’”

Here Lars came to his relief.

“And so we come to request you to send away that instrument of yours, or burn it, so that it may no longer be a stumbling-block” —

“To the young of your parish,” added the young man.

The priest kept smoking his pipe most vigorously, and finally, making a visible effort to compose himself, he said : —

“To *me* there is no temptation in this instrument; on the contrary, it affords me recreation and relief. Now you know that whatever is able to divert our minds makes it easier for us to receive and understand good things; consequently I firmly believe that such things as this instrument are a help to me.”

“And *I* know there are priests who, in accordance with the words of Paul, would rather make a sacrifice of such pleasures than offend the children of the parish,” said the young man.

“It may be that I, too, formerly interpreted his words in that way,” answered the priest “but I do not do so now. A person may give

up a habit or a comfort ; but he should avoid being narrow-minded and stupid for the sake of gratifying narrow-minded and stupid people. I would be wronging not only myself, but also those to whom I am to be an example, and I would be setting a bad example, an example contrary to my conviction."

It was not often that the priest could make so full an explanation when he was out of the pulpit. He added, —

"I will not give up my piano, I will not burn it, — I will listen to it frequently, for I often feel the need of it, and I cannot but wish that you, too, might occasionally, in an innocent manner, divert your minds with singing, playing, and dancing, for I regard these things as good and proper."

"Fy !" said the young man, tossing his head and spitting on the floor.

The priest's face turned red as blood, and perfect silence ensued. The man who sat swaying back and forth, struck up at the top of his voice the following hymn : —

" My God, on ev'ry side I see
Anguish, and pain, and care :
For men, whate'er their state may be,
Bend 'neath the cross they bear ;
And feeble flesh and blood rebel,
As every mortal knoweth well."

And then Lars remarked, in a low tone, —

“You say, then, that playing and singing and dancing are proper, do you? It is right to stir up Satan for sensual gratification, is it? That is what our priest says. Well, it is a good thing we have found it out! — Ah, he really says, that everything connected with idleness and sensuality tends to relieve and aid the mind; that what leads us into temptation is right and proper!”

But now Ødegaard made haste to interpose, for he saw by the priest's countenance that matters were coming to a bad pass.

“But tell me, my good friend, what is there which *does not* lead us into temptation?” he asked.

All looked at him from whom these well-considered words came. The question was in itself so unexpected that neither Lars nor the others could make an immediate answer. Then a voice came as from a deep well or out of the cellar, —

“Work does not.”

The words came from the bundle of shawls it was Randi, who, for the first time, opened her lips. A triumphant smile lighted up Lars broad face; the light-complexioned woman looked with a believer's eyes at the speaker

and even the young man, who stood near the door, lost for a moment the sneering expression of his lips. Ødegaard understood that Randi was the chief person, though her head was not visible. He therefore addressed himself to her.

“Of what kind must work be, if it is not to lead us into temptation?”

She was unwilling to make a reply to this question, but the young man answered for her.

“The curse reads: ‘In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread!’ It is, then, such work as gives us toil and trouble.”

“And nothing but toil and trouble? May not work bring profit?”

Now he, too, was at a loss what to answer; but the man with the broad face and double chin felt moved to come to his relief.

“Yes,” said he, “we may make all we can.”

“Well, then work, too, may lead us into temptation; we may be tempted to make too much.”

In this dilemma relief came from the sepulchre of shawls.

“Then it is the profit and not the work that leads us into temptation.”

“Certainly; but what do you say if the work is carried to excess for the sake of the profit?”

The bundle of shawls lapsed into silence again, but Lars took the floor.

"What do you mean by carrying work to excess?"

"I mean when it makes you a brute, when it makes a slave of you."

"There should be slavery," said the young man, who had been quoting the curse.

"But can work when looked upon as slavery lead us to heaven?"

"To work is to serve God," cried Lars.

"Are you able to say that of *all* your work?"

Lars was silent.

"No; be reasonable, and admit that work can be carried to excess for the sake of profit, *as if it were the one object of our life*. Consequently, labor, too, has its temptations."

"Yes, my children, there is temptation in everything; nothing is free from it;" the priest now decided, as he rose and emptied his pipe as if to close the interview. A sigh was heard from the bundle of shawls, but no reply was made.

"Listen!" Ödegaard began again, and the priest filled his pipe once more, — "if our labor becomes profitable, that is to say, if it bears fruit, I suppose we are permitted to enjoy this fruit, are we not? If it gives us wealth, is it not proper for us to enjoy this wealth?"

His questions awakened grave doubts, and the visitors looked at one another.

"While you are reflecting I will answer," said Ödegaard. "God must have given us permission to try to turn his curse into a blessing, for He himself guided his patriarchs; He led all his chosen people to the enjoyment of wealth."

"The Apostles were forbidden to possess wealth," the young man interposed, in a tone of certain victory.

"Yes, that is true; for God wanted to place them *above* and *beyond* all human circumstances, that He might be to them all in all, — they were called by the Lord."

"We are all called."

"But not in the same sense; are you called to be an apostle?"

The young man's face turned pale as a corpse; his eyes grew dark under his heavy forehead; he must have had some special reason for taking the remark so much to heart.

"But the rich man must work, too," remarked Lars; "for work is commanded."

"Certainly, he must, although in other ways and for different purposes. Each one of us has his own peculiar task to perform. But tell me, must we work *all* the *time*?"

"We must also pray!" chimed in the fair-complexioned woman, folding her hands, as if recollecting that she long had neglected to pray.

"Ah, I see; we must pray whenever we do not work; is that it? Can any man do that? Must we not also rest."

"We ought not to rest before we are tired; then no wicked thoughts would tempt us; ah, no, then we would not be led into temptation," sighed Else again, and the psalm-singer once more fell in with a verse from the hymn-book:

"Go, then, tired heart and frame,
Seek rest in Jesus' name!
For ye, too, shall trouble cease,
For ye, too, shall come a peace, —
A little bed within the soil,
Free from any care or toil."

"Please be still, Erik!" said the priest, "and pay attention to what this man is saying."

And now Ödegaard began to sum up the conclusions: —

"You see: Work brings forth its fruit and requires rest. But my opinion about social intercourse, singing, playing, and the like is, that they, on the one hand, are the sweet fruits of labor, and that they, on the other hand, furnish the mind refreshing rest."

There was now great commotion in the camp; all eyes were fixed on Randi, for now the main body of the army must take the field; she swayed to and fro in her seat for a while, and then she began slowly and quietly, —

“There is no rest to be found in worldly singing and in playing and dancing; for such things excite the flesh to sinful lusts. Nor can that be a fruit of labor which destroys our work and makes us weak.”

“Ah, these things are full of temptation,” said the fair-complexioned woman, with a sigh.

This sentiment was reëchoed by Erik in a verse from the hymn-book: —

“Each day, we see, worse than before,
How sin is growing more and more.
Lies the garb of truth are wearing,
Vice the form of good is bearing;
Entering on our spirits, slyly,
There to rear their foreheads highly.”

“Be silent, Erik!” said the priest; “you only confuse us.”

“Oh, yes; that is very likely,” answered Erik, beginning anew: —

“If specious flatterers seek to win
Do not thou be led astray;
Dread the open path of sin,
Keep thou in the narrow way.”

“Will you not hold your tongue, Erik! the

hymn is good enough ; but there is time and place for everything."

"Yes, yes, pastor, that is so, — time and place for everything, and so —

"In every place, at every time,
May thy soul be praises singing ;
Therein every heart shall chime
Like the bells for worship ringing."

"No, no, Erik ; then the prayer would also become a source of temptation ; you would have to turn Roman Catholic and enter a monastery."

"The Lord forbid !" exclaimed Erik, opening his eyes wide, then shutting them again and beginning, —

"As foulest mire to purest gold
Is faith, to Popish error sold !"

"Hear me now, Erik ; if you cannot be silent, I beg you to leave the room. Where did we leave the discussion ?"

But Ödegaard had been listening to Erik with great amusement, and did not remember where the conversation had been interrupted. Then a peaceful voice was heard from beneath the bundle of shawls.

"I remarked that there can be no rest or fruit of labor in *that*, which' —

"Now I remember : in *that* which leads us into temptation, — and then Erik came and

demonstrated to us that prayer can also be a source of temptation. Now let us look and see what these things may lead to. Have you observed that happy people work better than those who are sad ? Why ? ”

Lars perceived whither this was aiming, and so he said, —

“ It is faith that makes us happy.”

“ Yes, if our religion is a cheerful one ; but have you not observed that one’s religion may be so gloomy that it turns the whole world into a penitentiary ? ”

The fair-complexioned woman kept sighing so incessantly that the bundle of shawls could not refrain from stirring again ; but Lars gave her such a sharp look that she was silenced. Ødegaard continued, —

“ The same occupation constantly, whether it be work, prayer, or amusement, would make us stupid and gloomy. You can dig in the dirt until you become a brute ; pray until the habit makes you a monk ; and play until you become a mere puppet. But combine the three ! The change will strengthen the heart and soul ; thus your work will be made more fruitful and your religion more cheerful.”

“ You would then have us cultivate cheerfulness,” said the young man, with a sneer.

“To be sure! and as for yourself, you would in that way get friends in the world; for it is only when we are happy that we are able to see and love what is good in others. And you cannot love God unless you love your fellow-men.”

No one venturing to contradict this statement, Ødegaard tried a second time to sum up the conclusions and put an end to the interview, saying, —

“The things which disenthral our minds, so that the Spirit of God can do its work in our hearts (for it does not work in the hearts of slaves); the things that do this must be a blessing, and amusements must therefore be right and proper.”

The priest rose; he again had a pipe to clear.

In the stillness which now followed, and which was not broken by sighs, the bundle of shawls was again seen stirring, and finally Randi said, gently, —

“It is written, ‘Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;’ but can worldly singing and playing and dancing be to the glory of God?”

“No, not directly; but may we not ask the same question in regard to our eating, sleeping and clothing ourselves? And yet we *must* do

these things. The inference, therefore, is inevitable that you must refrain from that which is sinful."

"Yes, but are not these things sinful?"

For the first time Ædegaard became somewhat impatient; he therefore merely answered:

"We read in the Bible that both singing and playing and dancing were common in ancient times."

"Yes, to the glory of God."

"Very well — to the glory of God. But why did the Jews always name God in connection with everything? Because they were children and had not yet learned to make distinctions. To children *all* strangers are 'the man.' To the child's question, 'Where does this or that come from,' we always give the same answer, 'from God.' But as grown men, when we speak to grown men we also name the intermediate cause; we name not only the giver, God, but also the person to whom we are indebted. Thus it is possible that a beautiful song may treat of God or lead us to God, although the name of God is not mentioned in it; for many things lead to Him, though indirectly. Our dancing, when we do it for our health and for innocent amusement, is a way, though it be an indirect one, of prais-

ing *Him*, who gave us health, and loves to preserve in us the hearts of children."

"Bear that in mind! think of that!" said the priest. He was conscious that he for a long time had misunderstood these things, and that he had misinterpreted them to others.

But Lars had long been occupied in silent reflection. Now he was ready. The grain had gradually been sinking from the broad brow down into the short, crabbed, lower part of the face; it had been crushed and ground, and the grist was now brought forth.

"Are, then, all kinds of fables, stories, and tales, all kinds of poetry and fiction, with which books are filled nowadays,—I say, are *they*, too, allowable? Is it not written, 'Keep thy lips from speaking guile.'"

"I am very much obliged to you for speaking of this. Your mind, you see, is like the house you live in. If it were so small that you scarcely could walk erect or stretch your limbs in it, you would have to go to the trouble of enlarging it. And just so poetry elevates and expands the mind! Should all our thoughts and ideas that are *beyond* our actual necessities be false, then the most necessary ones would also soon become so. They would so contract you in your earthly tenement that you would

never reach eternal life, the very goal for which you are striving, and it is these very thoughts, which by faith should bear you heavenward."

"But poetry, is not that something which has no foundation in fact; is it not falsehood?" inquired Randi, thoughtfully.

"No, there is often more truth in it than there is in what we actually see before our eyes," answered Ödegaard.

They all looked at him with skeptic eyes, and the young man remarked, —

"I never knew before that the stories about Cinderella had more of truth in them than there is in what I see with my own eyes."

They all tittered a little.

"Then tell me whether you always comprehend the things that you see around you."

"I suppose I am not sufficiently learned."

"Ah, the learned are even more at a loss to understand them than you are! I refer to such things in our every-day life as bring sorrow and pain and which make us worry ourselves gray, as the saying is. Do not such things happen to us?"

He did not answer, but from the depths of the bundle of shawls was heard, —

"Yes, very often."

"But supposing you read a fictitious story

which resembled your own experience in such a manner that it made you understand yourself; would you not say of that story which gave you the key to your own life, and which gave you the comfort and courage gained by knowledge, that you found more truth in it than in your own life?"

The light-complexioned woman said, —

"I once read a story which so aided me in my sorrow, that it almost turned my affliction into joy."

The bundle of shawls coughed faintly, adding, in a timid voice, —

"Yes, that is true."

But the young man would not give his consent to this concession, and so he asked, —

"Can anybody find comfort in the stories about Cinderella?"

"To be sure, everything has its use. That which is ludicrous has great influence over us, and the story of Cinderella shows in a humorous manner how one whom the world regards as most insignificant, may still be of great importance. It shows how everything is made to serve one who has a stout heart, and how there is a way where there is a will. Do you not think it might be well for both children and grown people to remember that story?"

"But to believe in witchcraft and trolls is superstition, is it not?"

"Who has said that you shall believe in them? They are mere *figures of speech!*"

"But we are forbidden to use images and figures; they are all devices of the devil."

"Is that so? Where do you find that?"

"In the Bible."

"No," the priest now interposed, "that is a mistake; for the Bible itself makes use of figurative language."

They all looked at him.

"It makes use of figures on every page," continued the priest, "for the oriental peoples have a marked tendency to express themselves figuratively. We have imagery in our churches and in our language; we employ it in wood, in stone, and on canvas; and we are unable to conceive the Godhead otherwise than through an image. Nor is this all. Christ makes use of figures of speech; and did not the Almighty Himself assume various forms and disguises when He revealed Himself to the prophets? Was it not in the form of a traveler He came to Abraham in Mamre and ate at his table? And if God can assume various forms and make use of figures, then man certainly can do so."

They all had to agree ; but Ödegaard rose and tapped the priest gently on the shoulder, saying, —

“Thank you, sir ! There you presented the most conclusive evidence from the Bible that the drama is allowable !”

The priest started in alarm ; the smoke which filled his mouth came forth voluntarily, as it were.

At this point Ödegaard crossed the floor and approached the bundle of shawls, and bent down to catch a glimpse of the face, if it had any ; but in vain.

“Are there any other questions you would like to ask ?” he inquired ; “for you seem to me like a person who has reflected on many things.”

“Oh, the Lord be merciful to me ; my thoughts are not always what they should be.”

“It usually is the case that one is, during the first period after the grace of conversion, so filled with joy at the wonders that have been wrought, that everything seems useless and improper. He is like the lover who desires nothing but his beloved.”

“Yes, but look at the first Christians. I should think we might take them for our examples.”

“No, their peculiar circumstances, placed as they were in the midst of heathens, were different from ours, and demanded of them a rigorous life. It is our duty to imbue the life, which we find about us, with a Christian spirit.”

“But,” said the young man, for the first time without bitterness, “there are so many passages in the Old Testament, which are in direct opposition to the spirit in which you speak.”

“Yes, that is true; but those passages are now void. They are ‘done away.’ As Paul says, ‘We are ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit.’ And again, ‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.’ And still further, ‘All things are lawful unto me, but,’ adds he, ‘all things are not expedient.’ But we are fortunate in having before us the example of the life of a man who demonstrates to us what Paul meant. I refer to that of Luther. You certainly believe that Luther was a good and intelligent Christian, do you not?”

They had no doubt of that.

“Luther’s faith was cheerful. *His* was the faith of the New Testament! His opinion was that the devil was very apt to be lurking behind a gloomy faith. Luther’s idea in regard to

fear of temptation was, that he who fears least is least apt to be tempted. He made use of all the faculties God had given him, including the capacity for enjoyment; of this his whole life is a proof. Would you like to have me cite a few instances? The pious Melancthon was at one time so busy at work upon an essay in defense of the pure doctrine that he did not allow himself time to eat. Then Luther snatched the pen from his hand, saying, 'We do not serve God by work alone, but also by rest and quiet; and this is why God has given us the fourth commandment and instituted the Sabbath.' Again, Luther employed figures of speech in his conversation and sermons, the amusing alternating with the serious, and he was full of splendid and witty conceits. He also translated good old folk-lore tales into his mother-tongue, and stated in the preface to them that he scarcely knew of anything better for moral instruction except the Bible. He played the lute, as you perhaps know, and sang with his children and friends, not only hymns, but merry old ballads, too. He was fond of social games, played chess, and he used to invite the young people to dance at his house. All he asked was that it should be done with modesty and propriety. All this an old, simple-hearted dis-

ciple of Luther, namely, the priest Johan Mathesius has recorded, and he even preached it to his flock from his pulpit. He urged his hearers to follow Luther's example. Let us do likewise!"

The priest rose, saying, —

"My dear friends, let this suffice for to-day."

And they all rose.

"Much has been said for our enlightenment," continued the priest; "now may the Lord bless the seed that has been sown!"

"You live, my dear friends, in remote and isolated places. Your homes are far up in the mountains, where the grain is cut by the frost oftener than by the scythe. Such barren and deserted mountain regions should never have been built upon. It would be better to turn them over to trolls and to the grazing cattle. Spiritual life does not thrive well up there and it becomes gloomy like the surrounding vegetation. Prejudices hang over life like the rocks beneath which they are developed; they cast a dark shadow upon your hearts and tend to divide you. May the Lord unite and enlighten you! I thank you for your visit, my friends! It has opened my eyes, also, to many new truths."

He took each one of them by the hand as he

bid them good-by, and even the young man extended his with cordiality, although he did not look up.

"You are going over the mountain; when do you get home?" asked the priest, as they were about to leave.

"Oh, some time to-night," answered Lars; "there has been a heavy fall of snow, and where it has blown off there is a thick layer of ice."

"Yes, my friends, you deserve great credit for seeking the church under such circumstances. May no harm befall you on your way home."

Erik replied in a low tone : —

"If God but keep me in His care,
Assault me all who may,
I can rejoice my heart in prayer
And tread the narrow way."

"That is true, Erik. You were right this time," said the priest."

"Wait a moment!" said Ödegaard, just as they were ready to start. "It is not strange that you do not recognize me; but I think I must have some relatives in your neighborhood."

They all turned to look at him, even the priest, who, of course, had known this fact, but had doubtless entirely forgotten it.

"My name is Hans Ödegaard, and I am a son of Knud Hansen Ödegaard, the priest, who, many years ago, with his scrip on his back, wandered forth from among you."

Then was heard from out of the bundle of shawls, —

"Good Heavens! Knud Ödegaard was my brother."

There was a universal pause, and no one seemed able to say a word. Finally Ödegaard asked, —

"So it was you I visited once when I as a little boy went up there with my father?"

"Yes, it was."

"And you stayed with me a while," said Lars. "Your father is my cousin."

But Randi remarked in a sorrowful tone, —

"So you are that little Hans! How fast time flies!"

"How is Else getting on?" asked Ödegaard.

"This is Else," said Randi, pointing at the woman with the fair complexion.

"Are *you* Else," he exclaimed. "You were in trouble about a love affair at that time. You wanted to marry the fiddler of the parish. Did you get him?"

There was no reply.

In spite of the twilight, which was now rap-

idly coming on, Ödegaard could see that Else was blushing, and that the men either turned away or looked down, with the exception of the young man, who kept his eyes fixed upon her. Ödegaard discovered that he had touched upon an unpleasant subject, and so the priest came to his aid.

“No, Hans the fiddler is not married. Else married the son of Lars, but she now is free once more ; she is a widow.”

She again blushed crimson. The young man observed it, and smiled contemptuously.

But Randi interposed, —

“Yes, you must have traveled a great deal. I can see you have gathered a vast store of knowledge.”

“Yes, up to this time I have done nothing but travel and study ; but now I am going to stay at home and set to work.”

“Yes, that is the way of the world ! Some people go abroad and get light and wisdom, while others stay at home.”

And Lars added, —

“It is often hard to turn the soil of the homestead, and when we help a man on with a hope of making him useful to us, he deserts us.”

“There are so many vocations in life,” said the priest. “Each one must follow his bent.”

"The Lord knows how to direct our work," said Ödegaard. "If God so wills, you may yet reap the fruits of my father's labors."

"Ah, yes, I have no doubt of that," said Randi, in a meek voice; "but it is often hard to wait. Time passes so slowly."

The visitors now took leave. The priest stood by one window and Ödegaard by another, watching them as they proceeded up the mountains. The young man brought up the rear. Ödegaard learned in regard to him that he was from the city, where he had tried various enterprises, but had always become involved in some dispute or other. He believed himself intended for something great, thought that he was destined to be an apostle, but for some unaccountable reason he had stopped up in the Ödegaard neighborhood, as some thought from attachment to Else. He was a very passionate man, who had met with many disappointments and was destined to encounter many more.

The visitors had again become visible on the mountain, as the roof of the stable no longer hid them from view. They would disappear among the trees and then come into sight again as they kept wearily climbing higher and higher. There was no path in the deep snow. The trees served as waymarks, and in the far

distance the snow-capped mountains were beacons pointing out to the wanderers their way home.

But from the sitting-room in the parsonage came a couple of charming preludes, and then, —

“ I give my lays to the Spring, to the Spring !
To the Spring that is yet unborn !
I give my lays to the Spring, to the Spring, —
And I marry Hope to the Morn,
And longings to longings, and my heart to the hour
That kindles the air with a mystic power !
And our youth and warmth we, too, will ally,
And join together — the Spring and I —
And woo, and win over, the Sun to our side,
Grim Winter to balk of his gloom and his pride,
Bursting his fetters, and freeing the rills,
To dance and sparkle over the hills;
And to din their laughter into his ear,
Till he needs must know that his fall is near ;
Then, hunting him off from valley and brake,
By the fragrance of myriad blossoms that wake.
I give my lays to the Spring, to the Spring !
To the Spring that is yet unborn !
I give my lays to the Spring, to the Spring, —
And I marry Hope to the Morn ! ”

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER that day the priest spent but little time with the family; partly because he was busy getting ready for Christmas, and partly because he was engaged in studying whether the drama was allowable or not. The mere sight of Petra produced dismay and confusion in his mind.

While the priest, therefore, sat in his study, either writing his sermons or poring over a volume of Christian ethics, Ödegaard devoted his time to the ladies, between whom he was constantly making comparisons. Petra had a most changeable nature, and was never the same person. Whoever would learn to know her would have to study her as diligently as he would study a book. Signe, on the other hand, was most refreshing in her unvarying cordiality; her movements were never unexpected, for her very nature was reflected therein. Petra's voice had every color of tone; it was both shrill and gentle, and possessed every degree of intensity. Signe's was peculiarly pleasing, but

it lacked flexibility, — excepting to her father, who, in a masterly manner, was able to discriminate its slightest variations. Petra's mind was occupied by but one thing at a time: if it chanced to be attracted by different things at the same moment, it was merely to observe, never to offer any help or interference. Signe, on the other hand, had an eye for everything and everybody, and divided her attention in such a way that she scarcely seemed to be bestowing it on anything. Whenever Ödegaard spoke of Signe to Petra, the latter talked like a hopeless lover; but when he mentioned Petra to Signe, Signe became very reticent. The two girls often talked together, without restraint, but they conversed only about indifferent matters.

To Signe, Ödegaard owed a great debt of gratitude; for to her he was indebted for what he called his “new self.” The first letter he received from Signe in his great sorrow seemed like a soft hand laid on his brow. She related so cautiously how Petra had come to them, misunderstood and persecuted, and explained with so much delicacy how her coming must have been the result of a Divine interference, “that no life might be blighted,” that it sounded like a distant call in the forest when one has gone astray and knows not which way to take.

Signe's letters followed him wherever he went, and were the threads which bound him to life. She expected that every line would lead Petra directly to his arms, but the result was just the reverse; for the letters revealed the fact that nature had intended Petra to be an artist. This central point in her genius, which Ödegaard himself had vainly sought, Signe was unconsciously, but none the less constantly, keeping in view, and as soon as he realized this fact he saw both her mistake and his own, and it made him a new man.

He took good care not to tell Signe what her letters had taught him. The first word should not come from Petra's friends, but from her own lips, in order that there might be no undue haste. But from the moment when he made this discovery, Petra had appeared to him in a new light. Why, of course, these ever-changing impulses, each felt in full power, but all a series of mutual contradictions, what were they but the beginning of an artist's life? The task must be to gather all these impulses into one grand whole, else all would be mere patchwork and her life a failure. She must not, therefore, be permitted to enter too early an artist's career! Her wishes must be

met with silence as long as possible, nay, if necessary, with opposition.

Occupied in this manner with Petra's future, she became, before he was aware of it, the sole object of his thoughts; but he was working for her advancement and not to secure her for himself. He now began to study carefully everything connected with art; he looked into the life of artists and particularly into that of actors. He found much that must shock a Christian, and saw that there were many and great abuses. But did he not find them everywhere about him? Were they not in the church, too? Though hypocrites might be found among the priests, still their calling was a high and noble one. When the work for truth, which is going on everywhere, shall be felt in life and in poetry, will it not reach the stage also?

He gradually gained confidence in the case he had in hand. It afforded him great pleasure to learn from Signe's letters that Petra was rapidly progressing, and that Signe was just the one to help her. He had now come home to visit and thank this guardian angel, who was not at all conscious of what she had been to him.

But he had also returned to see Petra once

more. How far had she advanced toward the goal? The word had been spoken. He could therefore freely talk with her about her future. It was a pleasant thought to both of them, for it enabled them to avoid speaking of the past.

Meanwhile, they were soon interrupted by guests from the city, both invited and uninvited! Still matters had so far developed that a single well-improved opportunity would be sufficient to clear away every obstacle—and this opportunity was afforded by the arrival of the guests. A large party was invited to meet them, and immediately after dinner, while the gentlemen were together in the study, the conversation turned upon the drama; for the chaplain of the diocese had seen a work on Christian ethics lying open on the priest's table, and had there discovered the terrible word "theatre." An animated discussion followed, and in the midst of it the priest came in. He had not been present at the dinner-table, having been called away to see a sick person. He was in a grave mood, he refused to eat, nor did he join in the conversation. But he filled his pipe and listened. As soon as Ödegaard noticed that the priest was sitting quiet and paying attention, he also took part, but his efforts to present his views were for a long time fruitless,

for the chaplain had a way of exclaiming, whenever a conclusion was to be drawn from the proofs already presented: "I object!" and so the proofs themselves had first to be proved. The consequence was that the discussion went backwards instead of forwards. The debate had already passed from the theatre to navigation, and now in order to settle a point in regard to navigation, it had gone into agriculture.

But at this juncture Ödegaard appointed the priest as chairman. Several other priests were present and a sea-captain. The latter was a small black-haired man with a very corpulent form. He walked on a pair of legs which beat the floor like as many drumsticks. Ödegaard gave the chaplain the floor in order that he might have an opportunity of presenting in a connected statement his objections to the theatre. Accordingly the chaplain began:--

"Even upright men among the heathens were opposed to the drama. Plato and Aristotle objected to it on the ground that it corrupted the morals. I admit that Socrates occasionally went to the theatre, but if anybody, from that fact, draws the conclusion that he approved the drama, then I deny it; for we have to see many things that we do not approve. The first Christians were zealously

warned against the stage. Read Tertullian! Since the drama has been revived in modern times earnest Christians have both spoken and written against it. I may refer you in this connection to Spener and Francke, and to such writers on Christian ethics as Schwartz and Schleiermacher."

"Listen!" exclaimed the captain, who recognized the last name.

"The two latter," continued the chaplain, "admit that dramatic literature is allowable, and Schleiermacher goes so far as to think that a good play may be performed by amateurs before a private company, but he totally condemns acting as a profession. The *life* of an actor is so full of temptations that *it is our* duty to shun it. But is not the stage a temptation to the spectators? To be moved by feigned suffering, to be stimulated by fictitious examples of virtue (a danger we can better guard ourselves against when we read), leads us to believe that it is ourselves we see represented. It weakens the will and destroys all energy. It awakens a morbid appetite for hearing and seeing strange things and makes us the slaves of a sickly fancy. Is not this true? Who are the people that mostly attend the theatre? Are they not idlers, who want to be amused,

sensualists, who must have their baser appetites gratified, vain men and women, who desire to parade themselves before the gaping multitude, visionary people, who fly hither and thither from the realities of life, which they have neither the strength nor perseverance to battle with? There is sin before the curtain as well as behind it! I never knew earnest Christians to have any other opinion on the subject."

"You really frighten me," said the captain. "If I have been in such a pitfall, every time I have been at the theatre, then the deuce take me, if" —

"Fy! captain," said a little girl, who had entered the room, "you must not swear, for if you do, you will go to hell."

"You are right, my child, you are right."

But Ödegaard took the floor: —

"Plato made the same objections to poetry as to the drama, and what Aristotle's opinion was is doubtful. I therefore pay no attention to them. But the first Christians did well to keep away from *heathen* theatres, so I may safely pass them by, too. That earnest Christians in modern times have had scruples in regard to the drama, even when it was produced in a Christian community, I can understand, for I have myself been in doubt on the subject. But

if it be granted that it is proper for the poet to write a drama, then it must be proper for the actor to act it; for what else does the poet do but act it mentally when he writes it with enthusiasm and passion? and we know that, according to Christ's own words, he who sins in his *thoughts* is guilty. When Schleiermacher says that the drama must only be acted privately by amateurs, then he asserts that the talents which God has given us are to be neglected, while the Creator designed that they should be developed to the greatest possible perfection; for to that end they were given. We are all actors every day of our lives, when we in jest or in earnest mimic others or make their opinions our own. This talent of imitating predominates in some persons, and then I would like to know whether he would not be the sinner who neglects to develop it. He who does not follow his calling becomes unfit for other work, leads an unsettled and disordered life, in short he falls a far easier prey to his passions than if he followed the calling pointed out to him by his faculties. Where work and pleasure are one, temptations are excluded. But, it is claimed, the calling of an actor is in its very nature full of temptation. Well, there are many kinds of temptation. To *my* mind

that calling is most apt to lead us into temptation which induces us to think ourselves righteous, because we bring a message from the Righteous One, which deludes us to believe we have faith, because we preach faith to others, or, to speak more plainly, to my mind the priest's calling presents the greatest temptations of all."

Then followed a noisy interruption.

"I object," cried the chaplain.

"He is right," said some one else.

"Order!" demanded the priest, who presided.

"I object," repeated the chaplain.

"He is quite right!" was shouted by another.

"Order!" insisted the president.

"I never heard before that priests were worse than actors," interposed the captain.

This caused great laughter, and a shout came from all sides:—

"That is not what he said."

The captain: "I say he did, the deuce take me, if"—

"There! There! captain, the devil will soon be after you," said the little girl.

"You are right, my child, you are quite right," he answered.

Ødegaard resumed the broken thread of his remarks:—

“The danger of having our emotions excited, of acquiring a morbid appetite for hearing passionate and fanciful declamations, and of appropriating to ourselves the character of models in virtue is certainly present in the church no less than at the theatre.”

The statement again caused great clamor and confusion, which awakened a curiosity among the ladies to learn what was the matter. They opened the door, and when Ödegaard saw Petra among them, he said with more emphasis : —

“I admit that there are actors whose emotions are excited on the stage, and who when in church are no less deeply moved, and yet continue to be as wicked as ever. I am free to admit that there are on the stage many idle babblers, who would have been absolutely worthless in any other profession, while on the stage they fill a place for which they are adapted. But, as a rule, actors are like sailors, frequently placed in the most trying positions ; for the moments preceding the *début* are apt to be terrible ! Actors frequently become the instrument of some grand work in the hand of Providence ; they are often brought face to face with unexpected, grand, and sublime scenes. All this fills their hearts with fears and aspira-

tions and with a sense of unworthiness, and we know that Christ chose his companions among publicans and penitent women. I accord no license to actors. The greater I deem their mission in the land — and the fact that a country produces so few really great actors is sufficient proof of the greatness of the task — the greater is their guilt if they permit themselves to be governed by rancorous feelings or to degenerate into loose frivolity. But there is no actor who has not been taught by a series of disappointments how insignificant is applause and flattery, although the majority pretend to have faith in both. Thus we see their mistakes and faults, but we do not sufficiently understand their own relation to them, and everything depends on that.”

As Ödegaard resumed his seat, several gentlemen took the floor, and every one of them began to speak at the same time, when a voice was heard at the piano in the adjoining room, singing, —

“Of the days of my youth now I dream,”

and all the gentlemen hastened into the parlor.

It was Signe who was singing, and the guests knew of nothing more beautiful than her Swedish ballads. One song followed another, and now when these finest popular melodies to be

found in the whole world, the most faithful expression of the soul of a great people, had produced an elevating effect upon the auditors, who listened with expectant rapture, Ædegaard rose and requested Petra to recite a poem. She must have anticipated it, for a scarlet blush overspread her face. But she immediately came forward, though she trembled and had to lean on the back of a chair for support, and then with a countenance pale as death, she began : —

“ He longed for the life of a Viking bold,
He pined for the stormy sea;
His mother was feeble, his father old —
There was none, save he, the house to hold.
' Now here,' said the father, ' is a marvel to me,
That thou shouldst so pine for the stormy sea,
Who hast not a lack to be told.'

“ He sat and watched the clouds at night
Drift dark through the gloomsome sky:
He looked and longed, with main and with might,
Warriors seemed they, bound to the fight!
He sat and watched the morning break,
And the glorious sun bound forth, awake --
A monarch, whose robes were light.

“ He wandered down to the rocky shore,
Small share of work did he,
He heard the blustering breakers roar,
Shouting the deeds of the days of yore;
He saw, in the fight, the seething spray
Torn from the billows and tossed away:
And the heat of his heart grew more.

“ The world was just free of old Winter’s chain :
 It was in the sweet springtide ;
 And out on the stormy, steel-gray main,
 A war-ship fought to be free again,
 Tugged at her anchor, and flapped her sails,
 Tattered and torn by a hundred gales,
 And writhed like a creature in pain.

“ The sailors slept mid the ocean’s roar,
 Or caroused on the brine-washed deck ;
 When a voice fell down from the beetling shore —
 Reckless and mad were the words it bore
 ‘ Do ye fear to ride, now the waves run high ?
 There is joy in the venture that death is nigh :
 Give me the rudder — I ’m longing sore ! ’

“ Long and loud laughed the scornful crew ;
 ‘ Hark, how the battling crows ! ’ they said,
 And they fell to their cups and their ease anew.
 But a crag he tore from the rock, and threw —
 Two men fell crushed, with a shriek of pain !
 The sailors sprang to their feet again,
 And all their weapons drew.

“ Up flew the darts, like birds of prey
 Athirst for his young heart’s blood ;
 Head bare, he stood to the open day ;
 He tossed, with his hand, the arrows away.
 ‘ Wilt thou yield the rule of thy brig to me,
 Or fight, which lord of us twain shall be ?
 Whether, O chieftain, say.’

“ For answer, sped through the air a spear,
 It grazed the gallant’s cheek.
 Loud fell his laugh on the Viking’s ear :
 ‘ The arm is not forged that my life should fear !
 In Valhal, as yet, they wait not for me —
 But long, O chief ! hast thou plowed the sea :
 For *thee*, the port looms near.

“ ‘ So thy hark and her fortunes yield to my hold,
For the pulse of my heart beats high ! ’
The skipper smiled : ‘ Thou art daring and bold,
If thou longest so sorely, as thou hast told,
Come, he my warrior ! ’ He answered, ‘ Nay —
I was born to command, and not to obey !
The young must supplant the old. ’

“ ‘ Then down he sprang on the loose crags, nigher,
And flung these words o’er the wave :
‘ Champions, bound not by love of hire,
But who follow the lead of the soul of fire,
Let the stoutest arm in the battle prove
Which of us twain has the War-god’s love —
Which of us twain is the higher ! ’

“ ‘ To the corsair’s brow leapt an angry glow,
He dashed him into the wave ;
He cleft the breakers with many a blow,
Fighting to shoreward, fiercely and slow,
Till he clutched the shingles, free from all harms,
And was taken up by the strong young arms —
Then all on board breathed low.

“ ‘ But the chieftain looked in the stripling’s eye
And read there the soul of fire ;
And it pleased him well, though his hour was nigh,
That the mien of his foeman was gallant and high.
‘ Fling him arms,’ shouted he to the watchers on board :
‘ If I perish to-night, it shall be by *my* sword
In a hero’s hand that I die ! ’

“ ‘ All under the cliff, by the rock-strewn shore
Ah, fierce was the strife, and strong !
Rang many a shout mid the tempest’s roar :
Crashed many a blow, that the wild winds bore —
The crags moaned back : in the heart of the mere
The foul sea-dragon snorted for fear,
Then grew still — for the fight was o’er.

“ All under the cliff, on the lonesome strand,
 Lay the chief of the corsair crew.
 Then rose a shriek from the lawless band:
 ‘ Perished our lord, by this wolf-whelp’s hand!
 And over the vessel, and into the wave,
 Breaker and hurricane daring to brave,
 Reckless, they battled to land.

“ But up he raised him, the skipper bold,
 And, feebly, thus spake he: —
 ‘ The Saga ends when the triumph is told,
 And the life must close when the heart grows cold
 Warriors! here is a chieftain, fain
 To storm with ye o’er the restive main:
 The young must supplant the old!’

“ Dark, dark, they stood there, the pirate-horde,
 Wild, wild, sobbed the swelling sea;
 He showed, with his finger, the youthful lord,
 His place was waiting at Odin’s board:
 And his spirit fled. And the waves wailed loud,
 The youth stood fearlessly there, and proud,
 And leaned on the chieftain’s sword.

“ Slow, slow, all eyes were on him turned
 There leapt to his cheek a fire;
 His bosom throbbed, and his temple burned:
 He sprang to a rock that the rough sea spurned —
 Warriors! rear me a hillock of stones,
 That a trophy be raised o’er the hero’s bones,
 As his dauntless deeds have earned!

“ But, ere eve, our bark must be on the wave,
 And all our sails unfurled;
 For many a hazard have we to brave,
 And many a venture and exploit to crave.
 Life, my masters, is eager and fleet;
 And idle and vain are the loitering feet,
 That stay to mourn o’er a grave!’

' All over the sea, at the close of day,
Swept a dirge, like a bird of night;
It died — mid the rocks where the chieftain lay .
It died — and the glow of the sun's last ray
Crimsoned the white of the fluttering sails,
Unfurled once more to defy the gales,
And fly o'er the trackless way.

" Proud stood the youth at the rudder's head,
His hair in the gusty wind.
Close by the coast the vessel sped,
' Who steers the corsair's craft ? ' they said;
' He will run the bark on the surging reef ! '
But the father looked on the youthful chief,
And could not speak, for dread.

" Ah ! he smiled on his sire with mirthful glee,
From amid the surf and the spray :
' I am here to claim permission,' said he,
A lord of the winds and billows to be !
A lack have I, that must needs be told —
I long for the life of a Viking bold,
I pine for the stormy sea ! ' "

The poem was recited with a trembling voice, but with dignity and without the slightest trace of affectation. Her audience stood electrified, for a ray of sublimity, beautified by all the gorgeous colors of the rainbow, was beaming upon them. Not a word was spoken and no one dared stir; but the captain was no longer able to restrain himself. He sprang to his feet, and, puffing and gesticulating, he exclaimed : —

" I do not know how the rest of you feel, but

for *my* part, when I am surprised in this manner, then the deuce may take me, if " —

" Captain! there you swore again," said the little girl, pointing at him with a menacing finger; "the devil will come and take you right away."

" Well it makes no difference, my child; let him come, if he wants to, for now, the deuce take me, I must have a national song."

Without any other special urging, Signe took her seat at the piano, and the whole company joined, with merry voices, in the following song: —

" My land will I defend,
My land will I befriend,
And my son, to help its fortunes and be faithful, will I train;
Its weal shall be my prayer,
And its want shall be my care,
From the rugged old snow mountains to the cabins by the main.

" We have sun enough, and rain,
We have fields of golden grain;
But love is more than fortune, or the best of sunny weather;
We have many a Child of Song,
And Sons of Labor, strong,
We have hearts to raise the North Land, if they only beat together

" In many a gallant fight
We have shown the world our might,
And reared the Norseman's banner on a vanquished stranger's
shore;
But fresh combats we will brave,
And a nobler flag shall wave,
With more of health and beauty than it ever had before!

"New valor shall burst forth;
 For the ancient three-cleft North
 Shall unite its wealth and power, yielding thanks to God the Giver!
 Once more shall kinsmen near
 To their brethren's voice give ear,
 And the torrents of the mountains wed their forces in the river

"For this North Land is our own,
 And we love each rock and stone,
 From the rugged old snow mountain to the cabins by the main;
 And our love shall be the seed
 To bear the fruit we need,
 And the country of the Norsemen shall be great and *one* again!"

Here Signe rose from the piano, approached
 Petra, put her arm about her waist, and drew
 her into her father's study, which was empty.

"Petra, shall we be friends again?"

"Oh, Signe, then you do at last forgive me!"

"I could do anything now! Petra, do you
 love Ödegaard?"

"Good heavens, Signe!"

"Petra! I have thought so ever since the
 first day, — and I supposed that he was now at
 length come to — all that I for two years and
 a half have thought or done for you, has been
 done with this object in view, and father has
 been of the same opinion. I am sure he has
 talked with Ödegaard about it before this."

"But, Signe!" —

"Hush!"

Signe laid her hand on Petra's lips, and has-

tened out of the room. Somebody had called her. The guests were asked to sit down to tea.

There was wine on the table, because the priest had been absent from dinner. During the supper the host sat very quiet and very earnest, as if there had been no guests at the table. But when the others were about to rise he tapped his wine-glass and said: —

“I have a betrothal to announce!”

All fixed their eyes on the young ladies, who sat side by side scarcely knowing whether they should sink under the table or retain their seats.

“I have a betrothal to announce!” the priest repeated, as if finding it difficult to make a beginning.

“I am free to confess that at first I was not in favor of it.”

All the guests looked at Ödegaard, in great amazement, but their astonishment knew no bounds when they saw him quietly looking at the host.

“To tell the truth, I did not think the bridegroom worthy of the bride.”

Here the guests became so embarrassed that no one dared look up, and the courage of the young ladies having failed them long ago, the priest had only one countenance to speak to,

and that was Ödegaard's, who meanwhile was enjoying the most blissful composure.

"But now," continued the priest, "now that I have become better acquainted with him, the result is that I am not sure that *she* is worthy of *him*, so much has he grown in my estimation. The groom's name is Art, the great Histrionic Art, and his betrothed is Petra, my foster-daughter, my beloved child. May your union be a happy one! I tremble at the thought, but what God has joined together let not man put asunder. The Lord be with you, my daughter!"

In a trice Petra had crossed the floor and thrown herself into the priest's arms.

As none of the guests resumed their seats, they all, of course, left the table. But Petra approached Ödegaard, who led her away to the farthest window-corner. He had something he would say to her, but she would not let him speak before she had said, —

"To you I owe it all!"

"No, Petra!" he answered; "I have only acted the part of a good brother. It was wrong of me to wish to become more; for had that happened your whole career would have been a failure."

"Ödegaard!"

They were holding each other's hands, but their eyes did not meet. After a little while he let go of her hands and turned away. But she threw herself upon a chair and wept.

The next day Ödegaard left the parsonage.

Toward spring Petra received a large letter, bearing a huge official seal. It frightened her, and she took it to the priest, who opened and read it. It was from the mayor of her native town, and its contents were as follows :—

“Pedro Ohlsen, who died yesterday, left the following will :—

“The property which I leave, of which there is a complete inventory in my account book, which will be found in the blue chest which stands in my room in the house of Gunlaug Aamundsdatter near the mountain, to which room the aforesaid Gunlaug has the key, and she alone is acquainted with the whole matter, — I hereby bequeath (provided the said Gunlaug Aamundsdatter gives her consent, which she cannot do unless she permits that the condition herewith inclosed and which she alone, as the only one who knows the facts, can perform, be fulfilled) to Jomfru Petra, the daughter of the aforesaid Gunlaug Aamunds-

datter, provided said Jomfru Petra thinks it worth while to remember an old, sick man, to whom she has been kind, though she was not aware of it, for it was not possible for her to know it, and to whom she has been a joy in his closing years, wherefore he has deemed it proper to do her a small favor in return, which he trusts she will not despise. May God be merciful to me a poor sinner!

PEDRO OHLSEN.'

"I therefore take the liberty of inquiring whether you will apply directly to your mother in regard to this matter or whether you wish to have me attend to the business for you."

The next day brought a letter from Petra's mother, written by the priest Ödegaard, the only person to whom she could confide these matters. The letter stated that she gave her consent and fulfilled the required condition, which was that she should inform Petra of Pedro's relation to her.

These tidings and the bequest awakened peculiar emotions in Petra's breast. It seemed as if all her hopes and aspirations were now to be realized. It was another indication that her time for leaving the parsonage was near at hand.

Thus old Per Olsen had fiddled at weddings and dances, Per Olsen and his son and grandson had in various ways toiled and labored, for the purpose of aiding Petra in her career as an artist. The sum was not large, but it was sufficient to give her a start in the world and hasten her progress.

Like a ray of sunshine into her mind came the thought that now her mother could come and live with her. She would now be able to be a joy to her mother every day and thus atone for all the sorrow she had caused her! She sent her a long letter by every mail, and could hardly wait for the answer. When it came it proved a great disappointment, for Gunlaug thanked her, but thought it would be better for "each to remain in her respective place." The priest now promised to write, and when Gunlaug received his letter she could no longer resist their entreaties. She had to tell her guests and acquaintances that her daughter was to be something great somewhere, and that she had sent for her to come and live with her. This turned the matter into a very important subject of gossip in the town. It was discussed on the piers, in the ships, and in every kitchen. Gunlaug, who up to this time had never mentioned her daughter, henceforth talked of noth

ing else than "my daughter Petra," and no one henceforth talked on any other topic to Gunlaug.

The time for Petra's departure was drawing near, but Gunlaug had not yet given a decisive answer, and this was a source of great trouble to the daughter. On the other hand, she received a solemn promise from the priest and Signe, that they would both come to the city and be present at her first appearance on the stage.

The snow was beginning to disappear from the mountains, and the meadows were gradually growing green. The life which is awakened by the coming of spring in the fields among the mountains is as full of energy as the longing was deep. The people become more elastic in their walk ; they do their work with more alacrity, and their hearts are filled with a longing to travel and find out what there is beyond the lofty mountains that shut them in on every side. Although Petra, too, was filled with yearning, she still loved the place and everything in it more than ever now that she was to leave. It seemed as though she had neglected her surroundings heretofore, as though she now for the first time appreciated their

beauties. Having only a few days left to remain, she and Signe walked about, bidding adieu to everybody and everything, and taking a parting look at the places which had become so endeared to them. Then it was announced to them by a peasant that Ödegaard was up at the Öygards and that he was about to come down and pay them a visit. The announcement greatly excited both the girls, and they ceased their rambling walks in the neighborhood.

But when Ödegaard came he was more cheerful and happy than he had ever been seen before. His errand in the parish was to open a popular high school and to manage it himself in the early stages until he secured a suitable teacher. Later he designed to set other projects afoot. In this way he would pay, he said, a part of his father's debt to the parish, and his father had promised to come and live with him as soon as the school building was finished. Both the priest and Signe were more than pleased with this accession to the neighborhood. Petra, too, felt happy, but still it seemed strange to her that he should take up his abode in the place just as she was leaving it forever.

It was the priest's desire that they together should celebrate the Holy Communion the day

before Petra's departure. Thus a quiet solemnity pervaded the last days of her stay, and when they talked it was in a subdued tone. All seemed imbued with this sentiment, and Petra spoke with emotions of profound seriousness, as her eyes rested for the last time upon the scenes around her. Thoughts of her past experiences crowded into her mind. She was making up her account with her former self. Hitherto she had never looked into the past, but only into the future. Now her whole life stood before her from her childhood up to the present moment; the first enchanting Spanish ballads again sounded in her ears; the many mistakes she had made and all the confused aspirations of her childhood and youth were one by one taken up and reviewed, just as one would examine old patterns. If there was anything she happened to forget there would be something at hand to serve as a reminder; for each object was in her mind closely associated with some thought or other. Especially did the piano recall a number of associations that almost overwhelmed her. She would sit down by it without being able to play a note, and if Signe played she could scarcely remain in the room. She was happiest when alone. This Ødegaard and Signe understood, and respected

her feelings. Everybody regarded her with a sad kindness, and the priest never passed her during these days without stroking her hair.

At length the day came. The atmosphere was hazy and the sky was half covered with clouds. The snow was melting on the mountains and the fields were growing more and more green. The four persons remained each in his own room until the hour came for them to go together to the church. Besides them there was no one present except the deacon and a priest who had been invited to officiate, as Signe's father was to partake of the Holy Communion. But the latter had determined to preach the communion sermon himself, for he had some words of encouragement to say to his foster-child, whom he was soon to lose. He spoke as he was wont when they on some birthday or church festival were sitting at his own table. Time would soon show, he said, whether the period which she now was closing in prayer to God for mercy had laid a good foundation for her future. No person becomes perfectly true in all his relations before he has found his right calling. Hers was a teacher's calling, and he who labored earnestly and honestly and preserved his character free from stain, would reap the greatest and most lasting harvest. It

was true, he said, that God also often employed unworthy instruments; and in a higher sense we were all unworthy; but He accomplished his ends by making use of our aspirations and desires. There was, however, one kind of teaching which no man could find in his desires alone, and he hoped she would try to attain to *it*; we must all aim at the highest and greatest perfection. He gave her a most cordial invitation to come and visit them often, for the very object of Christian fellowship is that it shall help and strengthen our faith. If she should stray from the right path she would be most apt to find compassion in her old home, and should she be unable to understand her mistake, they would be able to warn her with more affection than anybody else.

After partaking of the sacrament they returned as they had come, and the remainder of the day each one spent in solitude; but Petra and Signe sat much of the night together in Petra's room.

The next day Petra was ready for her journey. At the parting meal the priest bade her the most tender farewell. He agreed, he said, with her friend in this, that she ought to begin her career with the preparation she now had, and begin *alone*. In the struggle which was

before her she would find how good it is to know that in one spot on earth there was a small band on whom she could with certainty rely. Only to feel sure that she was constantly remembered in their prayers,—she would find how much help there is in that.

After thus taking leave of Petra he addressed a word of welcome to Ödegaard. To be united in love in a common work was, he remarked, the most beautiful beginning of mutual affection. By this toast the priest surely did not have in his mind that which in his words brought the blush first to Signe's cheeks and then to Petra's. Whether Ödegaard turned red in the face, they did not know, for neither dared look at him.

But when the horses stood before the door, and the three friends had formed a circle about the young girl, while all the servants were gathered around the carriage, Petra whispered, as she for the last time embraced Signe, —

“I know that I soon shall hear important news from you. May God bless you!”

An hour later she saw only the snow-capped mountain-tops, which pointed out to her where the parsonage stood.

CHAPTER XII

ONE evening just before Christmas all the tickets were sold for the performance at the theatre of the capital. A new actress, whose name was in everybody's mouth, was to make her *début*. She was a product of the people, her mother being a poor fisher-woman. By the help of strangers, who had discovered her talents, she had attained her present position, and she was said to be a genius of great promise. Many strange things were whispered among the audience before the curtain rose. Rumor had it that she had been a terribly wild girl, and that after she was grown up she had betrothed herself to six young men at the same time and had kept up the engagements with all of them for six months. Indeed, the town had been mad with excitement on her account, and she had been escorted out of it by the police. It was very strange that the managers of the theatre would permit such a person to appear. Others insisted that there was not a particle of truth in these reports. Since she was ten years

old she had lived in the quiet family of a priest in the Bergen diocese. She was a charming young woman of culture and refinement; they were well acquainted with her and knew that she must have remarkable talent, for she was so beautiful.

Others sat there who were better informed. First among these was Yngve Vold, a wholesale dealer in fish, whose name was well known throughout the country. He had happened to come to the capital to look after his business, but some people said that his hot-tempered Spanish wife made his house so warm for him that he had to travel to get cool. Now he had taken the largest box in the theatre alone and had invited some of his chance acquaintances at the hotel table to go with him and witness "some strange deviltry." He was in the very best of humor until he discovered — could it possibly be he? — in a box in the second tier and surrounded by a whole crew of sailors — no! yes! — yes, indeed, it was Gunnar Ask! — Gunnar Ask, who, with the help of his mother's money, had become the owner and captain of *The Norse Constitution*. While sailing out of the fjord he had happened to come alongside of a ship called *The Danish Constitution*; and when Gunnar thought he observed

that it tried to pass him, he made up his mind that such a thing could not be tolerated. He stretched every stitch of canvas he had; it made the timbers creak in the old Constitution, and the result was that in his efforts to scud before the wind as long as possible, he very unexpectedly ran his vessel aground. Now he was involuntarily detained in the city while his vessel was being calked. One day he had met Petra in town. She had overtaken him on the street and had been so very kind to him both then and afterwards, that he not only forgot the grudge he bore her, but declared himself the most stupid codfish his native town had ever exported, that *he* had ever been so foolish as to think that he was worthy of such a girl as Petra. To-day he had purchased at a premium tickets for himself and for his whole crew, and he was sitting there, resolving to treat the latter between every act. The sailors, who were all from Petra's native town, and ranked among her mother's most welcome guests, — an earthly paradise her tavern was to them, — felt Petra's honor to be their own, and as they sat there they promised each other that they would applaud in a style that would astonish the audience.

But down in the parquet was seen the thick

bristly hair of the priest. He was calm; for he had intrusted Petra's cause into the hands of a Greater One. By his side sat Signe, now Mrs. Ödegaard. Her husband, Petra, and herself had just returned from a three months' trip abroad. She looked happy as she sat turned toward Ödegaard with a smiling face; for between them sat an old lady with snow-white hair, which encircled her sun-burnt countenance like a silver crown. She was taller than all those about her, and could be seen by every one in the audience, and it was not long before all the opera-glasses were directed toward her, for it was said that she was the mother of the young actress. She, whose name was a man's,¹ made so great an impression on the audience, that it reflected honor and credit on the daughter and thus aided the latter in gaining the good-will of the spectators in advance. A young people is full of anticipation. It has faith in its native powers, and thus the sight of the mother awakened the confidence of the audience in the daughter.

Gunlaug was oblivious to everything about her. She cared but little for the performance. What she wanted was to see whether the public were kind to her daughter.

¹ Gunlaug is frequently a man's name in Norway

Time passed. The conversation died away in the expectation that gradually deepened and increased as the hour for beginning drew nearer.

A lively flourish of drums, trumpets, and brass instruments at once introduced the overture. "Axel and Valborg,"¹ by Adam Oehlenschlæger, was to be played, and Petra had herself requested this overture. She sat behind the scenes and listened. But before the curtain sat as many of her countrymen as the house could hold, trembling for her, as we always do when the first step is to be taken where we look for a grand revelation from some one we hold dear.

Each one felt as if he were the one that was to make his own *début*. In such moments many prayers rise to heaven, even from hearts that seldom pray.

The overture was drawing to a close. Peace

¹ "Axel and Valborg" was the tragedy Petra heard the first time she went to the theatre. (See chapter vii., where the overture is described.) One version of this popular Scandinavian legend will be found in the ballad of "Axel and Walborg," which appears in Alexander Prior's *Ancient Danish Ballads* (vol. ii. p. 247); another in Robert Buchanan's *Scandinavian Ballad Stories* (pp. 117-159); a third in Oehlenschlæger's tragedy, "Axel og Valborg;" and a fourth in George Houghton's charming narrative poem entitled *The Legend of St. Olaf's Kirk*, recently published in a revised edition by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. — **TR.**

pervaded the harmonies, and they gradually dissolved as into sunlight.

The overture closed. Anxious silence ensued.

Then the curtain rose !



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